

University of Newcastle upon Tyne

School of Arts and Cultures

Fine Art

**A Cross-cultural Study of Chinese *Yi Jing* Aesthetic Theory
and *Ch'an* Philosophy Applied to Contemporary Art**

Bright Moon Tender Wind

by

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THESIS CONTAINS

VIDEO CD DVD TAPE CASSETTE

In commemoration of my beloved father

Chi-Chun Chiu

Abstract

This thesis examines aspects of the relationship between Eastern and Western art, and philosophy, specifically through the analysis and application of traditional Chinese *yi jing* aesthetic theory and *Ch'an* philosophy, with particular reference to contemporary environmental installation practice. I am particularly interested in the relationships between the artist, the audience, the artwork and the engagement of all of these with the space. I wished to see whether *yi jing* theory and *Ch'an* philosophy might be provide a framework for the development and direction of my own installation practice and to discover whether my resulting artwork could in turn produce a direct interpretation of *yi jing* and *Ch'an*.

All of this research has been written up in Chapter 1– 4 with an examination of essential background information on the aspects of Chinese art and aesthetic theory known as *yi jing*. Further such research was undertaken in the area of *Ch'an* Buddhism and its relationship to art and the artistic process. This was followed by an investigation of the characteristics of Chinese and Japanese garden design and how they can be seen to exemplify aspects of *yi jing and Ch'an*. I then considered the history and development of East-West cultural interaction, aspects of environmental and installation practice and certain works by Turrell, Long and Teshigahara in order to provide an historical and theoretical context for my practical work.

Chapter 5 provides a detailed account of 10 practical projects, featuring the process of initiation, development, realisation, appraisal and documentation. Each project has been created and organised according to specific aims and objectives with appraisal and reflection of each project contributing to the particular focus of the practical work that followed.

The conclusion of the thesis culminates in the final project, “Bright Moon Tender Wind”, which sought to provide a conclusive statement in relation to the research themes.

There is extensive documentation including images on a CD ROM for all my projects relating to the thesis.

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Introduction

1. Area of Research

I am an artist of Chinese descent living in Britain. I grew up in Taiwan within a traditional Chinese culture and was trained in both Chinese and Western art particularly in the field of painting. The philosophies of the East were those with which I naturally became acquainted with and attuned to. They were the essential formative cultural and philosophical influences upon me.

In 1997 I came to Britain to study Fine Art. The sense I had of myself as an artist was suddenly placed into a different context and this geographical separation from my native culture has prompted a gradual re-evaluation of my identity as an artist. I have become very aware of myself as a Chinese artist working in a Western European country and at the forefront of the experiences I have had in Britain have been those that have a relationship to the meeting of cultures, cultural diversity and globalisation.

The individual's re-evaluation of identity and life-experiences that accompanies migration interests me as do the attendant notions of expansion of cultural diversity and integration. Within this general preoccupation is also a belief that through the arts one can produce a greater understanding of different cultures and nations: the sharing of experience and the interaction involved in this creating possibilities for exciting "hybrids". Further, we live in a politically and economically global era in which a wider range of communications have become accessible to greater numbers of people, from air travel to satellite television and the internet. All of which has an

impact on the language and psychology of cross-cultural dialogue.

Rather than to ideas of cultural difference and opposition, my experiences have pushed me to consider those of artistic and cultural cross-fertilisation and influence.

These simple facts, which describe my situation as an artist, have determined the general parameters of the subject area of my research and defined the point from which I began to focus and define this research project.

2. Research Questions

The key interests outlined above provide the over-arching framework for my research. Within that framework I have focused on the specific key issues which connect my current studio practice and recent experience with my native upbringing and cultural background.

In essence therefore the principal research activity is centred on the exploration of the symbiotic relationship between Eastern philosophy and an installation practice:

1. To consider whether the key Eastern concept of *yi jing* aesthetic theory¹ and *Ch'an* philosophy² might determine approaches to the form and content of my

¹ The unity of Man and Heaven.

- The unification of the objective matter/phenomenon (materials and forms) and subjective matter/mind (artist's own consideration and creation) and then create a new form.

- The interpretation of *yi jing* in artist and audience, the artist's creation and expression and the audience appreciation, completion and participation.

- ² To directly understand the wisdom through self-experience and participation in the

practice within the field of installation, with particular regard to the relationships between the artist, the audience, the artwork and the engagement of all of these with the space.

2. In turn could the reading or experience of that installation practice offer an interpretation of *yi jing* and *Ch'an* concepts?

Such a means of approaching contemporary installation practice might provide a model for a meeting between, or integration of, Eastern and Western languages of art and culture. When considering this meeting of East and West it is tempting to focus solely on issues of East-West, West-East influence, however my principal concern is the relevance and usefulness of this model in determining and defining my own practice. My aim therefore has not been to focus this research within an art historical examination but rather to establish my own individualised and particularised practice as the principal reference point.

3. Research Method

The method by which I have undertaken this research has been divided into two areas.

Firstly, a series of 10 practical projects has been carried out during a three year period. Each project has been created and organised according to specific aims and

phenomenon of the world. One cannot see reality without actually being merged with the daily-based phenomenon of the world.

- The unity of Heaven and Man. Creation mind and *Ch'an* heart as one part within each other.
- The physical reality is often the result of the understanding of the meaning of emptiness alongside concepts of calm and serenity.

objectives with appraisal and reflection of each project contributing to the particular focus of the practical work that followed. This series culminated in the final project, “Bright Moon Tender Wind”, which sought to provide a conclusive statement in relation to the research themes.

Secondly, the field of East-West cross-cultural influence, aspects of environmental and installation practice and key principles of *yi jing* and *Ch’an* Buddhist philosophy have been studied in order to provide an historical and theoretical context for the practical work. It has also provided a means by which the focus and development of the practical projects could be clarified.

Research in these two fields was undertaken in parallel and at different times each in turn resulted in key developments in the overall research project.³

The Specific research methods/details are bellow

Studio

Each project was developed according to specific aims which are summarised below. The key aims with which the first project began were generated by studio work and general research into the history and theory of cross-cultural influence carried out as part of my M.F.A. examination submission in 1999. In the later projects the aims were determined by the conclusions formed following review of previous projects and informed by the developing focus on Eastern philosophic issues in my written research.

³ Examples of this would be pervaded elsewhere in the document, both in the art historical section and the project descriptions.

1. **The Deep Ocean of the Heart:** The aim was to examine the forms and materials from the last stages of my MFA studio work within a different site-specific space in order to determine whether they might form a useful point of departure for my Ph.D. studio research.

2. **The Fairy Land:** An exterior, woodland space was chosen to explore the potential of the relationship between natural materials, landscape space and the audience's activity of observation.

3. **The Sutra Project:** The artist's action of repeatedly inscribing a Sutra onto the walls of an enclosed space sought to examine the relationship of artist, artwork and space with reference to *Ch'an* teaching on the function of daily life.

4. **The Smiling Soul:** This project was created to examine the notion of Chinese philosophical *yi jing* in respect to ideas of spatial engagement.

5. **The Heart Series:** Issues arising from the first project (*The Deep Ocean of the Heart*) were re-examined in relation to *Ch'an* concepts of unity within the context of a different kind of public space.⁴

6. **The Mind to Mind:** Here the intention was to see how the content of The Sutra Project might change by setting it into a different space and introducing additional elements.

7. **The Heart Sutra:** The aim was to consider the potential unity between the artist, the audience and the space in a different way through the inclusion of a

⁴ A state of unity between Man and Heaven in the contemporary living environment and concentrated the focus on one thing at a time in order to understand the great wisdom.

performance element.

8. The Looking for the “Moon”: This project concentrated on the audience’s interaction in relation to scale, space and the material and immaterial.

9. I Make Art, I Cook Food: This was a further exploration related to *Ch’an* ideas of daily experience, and also of the immaterial. The daily action of chopping vegetables within a gallery space also provided the opportunity to consider viewer - artist - artwork - space relationships.

10. The Puzzle: This project aimed mainly to testify to the relationship between the artwork and the audience focusing solely on the audience’s participation.

11. The Bright Moon Tender Wind: In this final project the aim was to bring together in resolved and integrated form the principal concerns of the research. Namely, using interpretations of Chinese aesthetic *yi jing* theory and *Ch’an* concepts as a base for the development of a site-specific installation.

For each project a number of points were determined following consideration of the principal aims: a specific site was selected and researched; a date and timescale decided upon; choices of materials made; form of construction and manipulation of space developed; project installed, documented and assessed.

Chapter 5 provides a detailed account, project by project, of this process of initiation, development, realisation, appraisal and documentation.

Written

Research which seeks to provide an historical and theoretical context for the practical work has been written up in Chapters 1-4.

Initially, library research was undertaken which would provide essential background information on the aspects of Chinese art and aesthetic theory known as *yi jing*. Further such research was undertaken in the area of *Ch'an* Buddhism and its relationship to art and the artistic process. This was followed by an investigation of the characteristics of Chinese and Japanese garden design and how they can be seen to exemplify aspects of *yi jing and Ch'an*. In order to support library and Internet searches, research was also undertaken in the form of three contrasting fieldwork studies.

1. I underwent a week-long retreat in the Monastery of *Nong Ch'an* in Taipei in order to understand methods of practice⁵ of *Ch'an* wisdom and to learn to be as one in body, mind and environment. This enabled me to not only understand the concepts and practices of *Ch'an* but also to apply them to my thinking and artistic production.

2. I visited several Japanese *Ch'an* gardens⁶ in Kyoto, Japan. The reason for this visit was two-fold: firstly, to experience at first-hand those gardens affected by *Ch'an* philosophy and concepts, secondly in their articulation of space and time these gardens have inspired a number of important Western artists. I tried to discover

⁵ Sitting meditation, chanting meditation, lectures of *Ch'an* Buddhism.

⁶ Kyoto Imperial Palace, Nijo Castle, Daisen-in, Ryogen-in, Zuiho-in, Ginkaku-ji, Honen-in, Nanzen-ji, Manshu-in, Shisen-do, Konpuku-ji, Kinkaku-ji, Gio-ji, Ryoan-ji and Toji-in

the truth of these artists' inspiration from the original source.

3. I conducted several interviews with the Taiwanese artist Guang-Yu Li whose knowledge of Chinese philosophy, aesthetic theory, Buddhist philosophy and Western art and culture⁷ provides a relevant case history and great source of advice in relation to the key themes of the research project.

Developments in twentieth Century artistic practice have also been examined through library research and visits to view works on location.

In addition I presented a paper at the fifteenth annual conference on "Research-in-Progress" at the University of Edinburgh⁸ in order to place my personal research interests and progress within the public domain, and to gain peer review of my study thus helping me to redefine my research. I also attended Tate Modern's six-week public lecture series, "West meets East – Modern art and Eastern Spirituality" in order to consider the art historical perspective of the general theme.

All of this research has been written up in Chapters 1-4 in order firstly to define the terms of *yi jing* and *Ch'an*, and subsequently to illustrate how examples from both traditional oriental garden design and Western contemporary practice can usefully be approached via *yi jing* and *Ch'an*. This forms the context for the practical work carried out as the main component of the research project which is written up in Chapter 5/6 and documented in accompanying CD ROM.

⁷ Guang-Yu Li is a sculptor, trained at the National Taiwan University of Arts and studied MA in sculpture at the University of Madrid in Spain. Now teaching sculpture in the National University of Arts in Taiwan.

⁸ The Fifteenth of a yearly conference on "Research-in-Progress" at the University of Edinburgh. The faculty of arts Postgraduate Conference at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne.

Chinese culture, Chinese aesthetic theory and *Ch'an* Buddhist experience and wisdom belong to my personal history and provide both resources and inspiration for a practice equally reliant on developments in Western fine art practice in the modern period. As described previously they are at the very centre of the discussions of this research project.

4. Research Submission

This document brings together two investigative fields both centred on the key research themes as defined in the introduction. One field is in the form of written exploration of relevant aspects of history and theory of Eastern philosophy, Chinese aesthetic theory and contemporary Western installation/environmental practice. This field is set in relation to evidence, in the form of written accounts and photographic documentation, of a series of practical studio and site-specific projects undertaken to test out the potential for those Eastern philosophies and conditions of thinking to become integrated within a practice which developed from a twentieth Century Western base.

The written thesis is submitted along with a CD ROM of all recorded images from the research projects and in conjunction with the installation of the final project, "*Bright Moon Tender Wind*", which was available for examination at the time of the Viva.

Chapter 1

An Introduction to *Yi Jing*

The thrust of this research focuses upon Chinese *yi jing* theory combined with Taoist and *Ch'an* concepts, to provide a tool with which to explore aspects of contemporary fine art practice. It is important, firstly therefore, to give an account of *yi jing* and to define the term.

In order to understand Chinese aesthetic theory fully the most significant and essential task is to study that part of Chinese art and aesthetic theory known as *yi jing*. Chinese art has often been stereotyped as an impressionistic or romantic study of landscape and nature expressed through an oriental style, perceived and judged superficially on its stylistic appearance rather than for its deeper meaning and philosophical significance.

This chapter seeks to present and explain several aspects of *yi jing* theory in order to develop a terminology that relates strongly to the historical development of Chinese painting, poetry, and landscape garden design traditions. The second part of this chapter begins to explore the relationship between *yi jing* theory and the philosophy and aesthetics of *Ch'an* Buddhist⁹ art.

The final part of this chapter examines how *Ch'an* philosophy is expressed through the *yi jing* aesthetic system to reveal the deeper philosophical meanings that are implied and signified through this system.

⁹ *Ch'an* 禪 in Chinese, *Zen* in Japanese, *Son* in Korean, *Thien* in Vietnamese.

The Origins of *Yi Jing* Theory

Generally speaking, *yi jing* theory is a common and widespread aesthetic system that permeates traditional Chinese culture and aesthetics. *Yi jing* is typically used in Chinese poetry, painting, Chinese opera, garden design, etc, and acts as a bridge for the artist or artisan to connect with and express the profound significance of the universe and his/her relationship with it. Also, *yi jing* is a standard for the Chinese artist to measure the quality and beauty of his/her creation.

Yi jing became established as a symbolic theory throughout the Ming (明) and Chin (清) dynasties but it can be related back to the pre-Ch'in (770 BC- 221 BC) (先秦) the philosophy of Taoism¹⁰, the metaphysics of the Wei-Ch'ing (魏) dynasty, and the Buddhist ontology established in the Sui (581-618) (隋) and T'ang (618-907) (唐) dynasties. Those philosophical theories have related to aesthetic methodology about phenomenon and external phenomenon, phenomenon and mind, emptiness and fullness etc. (from the Wei-Ch'ing (265-420) (魏晉) to Sung-Yuan (960-1127) (宋元) period).

In the pre-Ch'in period, the famous sage and father of Taoism Lao Tzu emphasized in the "Tao Te Ching" that myriad phenomena are created by the Tao through the interaction of *Yin* and *Yang*¹¹, (emptiness and fullness). The Tao, is

¹⁰ Taoism was founded by Lao Tzu whose date is uncertain, speculation ranges from 600 BC to 200 BC. Taoism is centred in the concept of "Tao"- "the way" or "the path", and focuses on the *Yin* and *Yang* principles of nature- the positive and negative forces of the universe. One cannot exist without the other. Taoism believes the "Tao" is the origin of the universe and creates all living beings. Taoism also encourages people to live in harmony with nature instead of against it, and understands nature as constantly changing.

¹¹ *Yin* and *Yang*

All creatures are governed by the two sexual principles, *Yin* and *Yang*. "The Yin, principle of darkness, cold, and femininity, invited withdrawal, rest, passivity; the Yang, principle of light, heat, and masculinity, incited expansion, activity, even aggression." (Lao Tzu and Taoism, Max Kaltenmark, translated from the French by Roger Greaves, Stanford University Press, California, 1969)

essential, eternal, “above form” unchanging and in motion. By its very nature it cannot be fully described: there is the famous saying “*the Tao that cannot be spoken, if the Tao can be spoken of, it is not the constant Tao*”¹². Lao Tzu points away from mere worldly knowledge, dualistic thinking, and verbal discourse, and instead directs us towards that which is far greater, transcendent, constant and eternal.

As Chuang Tzu (ca. 369 ~ 286 BC.), the second most important person in Taoism, denied the value of words, he turned the meaning of words upside down deliberately.¹³ He employed words to mean the opposite of what they ordinarily mean in an everyday context, in order to testify to their fundamental meaninglessness and inadequacy. To illustrate this point, and because the passage is important in Taoist philosophy and has indirectly influenced *Ch'an* philosophy, let me quote one of Chuang Tzu's conception of words as being essentially meaningless.

*“The fish trap exists because of the fish; once you've gotten
the fish, you can forget the trap. The rabbit snare exists because*

Using the Amplifications' symbols, the *Yang* symbol is Ch'ien, the *Yin* symbol is K'un. As the Hsi Tzu says, “Ch'ien symbolises yang subjects, K'un symbolises yin subjects”; and again, “Ch'ien symbolises the mastery (chih) in a great origination, K'un symbolises the process of completion.” As we have said, the Ch'ien is the active element in the process, is the symbol of which directs, the K'un is the passive element, the symbol of that which completes. Thus there is the statement, “Take the Ch'ien: when it is quiescent it is self-contained; when it is active, it goes straight ahead. This is why it produces on the grand scale. Take the K'un: when it is quiescent, it is shut in; when it is active, it opens out. This is why it produces on a wide scale.” Thus Ch'ien and K'un complement each other, the Ch'ien being the active, initiatory element, the K'un being the passive, compliant element. And then, take the Ch'ien in itself and the K'un in itself, each has its quiescent side and its active side. The Ch'ien being (by its nature) “originatory”, is in a state of quiescence when it is not actually originating. When it is actually originating, then it is in a state of action. The K'un being (by its nature) responsive to originative power, is quiescent when it is not actually in a state of responding (or being acted upon); when it is actually responding, then it is in a state of action. “Self-contained.” and “straight ahead”, qualify the Ch'ien as the originating element; “shut in” and “opening out” qualify the k'un as the responsive element.” (P93, *The Spirit of Chinese Philosophy*, Yu-Lan Fung, translated by E.R.Hughes, Routledge & K. Paul, London, 1947)

¹² Chapter I, Tao Te Ching

¹³ P.15, Chuang Tzu, basic writings, translated by Burton Watson, Columbia University Press, New York, 1964

*of the rabbit; once you've gotten the rabbit, you can forget the snare. Words exist because of the meaning; once you've gotten the meaning, you can forget the words. Where can I find a man who has forgotten words so I can have a word with him?"*¹⁴

From this we can understand that Chuang Tzu has questioned the authority of words and man's dependence on linear or logical thought. We can see this too in the words of Bodhidharma (470-543)¹⁵ who on becoming the first patriarch of Chinese *Ch'an* Buddhism emphasised "*My way is taught through the mind, not through the written word.*"¹⁶

When the essential meaning of concepts has emerged as our target, words are no longer important. Words are merely a stage of a process that may result in producing a transformation of our mind/yi into a "formless" image/jing. We could use formless/emptiness to describe physical phenomena, and to present physical phenomena as formless/emptiness. In art, words can be described as a form or a

¹⁴ P.302, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, translated by Burton Watson, New York, Columbia University Press, 1968

¹⁵ Bodhidharma is credited with bringing *Ch'an* Buddhism to China and he is the First Patriarch of Chinese *Ch'an* Lineage. He was born on Oct. 5th. (Chinese Lunar Calendar) in Southern India, and was the third son of an Indian King; the royal family belonged to the Bhramin caste. Bodhidharma's Buddhist Master, Prajnatarā, was the 27th Patriarch of Indian Buddhism, taught Bodhidharma for many years, gave him Mind Transmission, made him the 28th Patriarch, and gave him the name Bodhidharma. Following the instruction of his Master to transmit Dharma to China, Bodhidharma travelled east to Southern China in 526 A.D. When he arrived in Kwang Chou, he was ceremoniously welcomed and greatly honoured by the local military official named Shao Yang. The same year, he was invited to the Capitol, Nanjing, to meet Emperor Wu Di of the Liang dynasty. Because the communication between the Emperor and Bodhidharma was mutually unsatisfactory, Bodhidharma left the palace, crossed the Yangtzu River, and continued north until he arrived at the Shao Lin Temple in Ho Nan Province. It was here that Bodhidharma became famous for meditating 9 years facing a wall.

After he gave his disciple, Hui K'o, the Robe, Begging Bowl, Lankavatara Sutra, and Mind Transmission, Bodhidharma went to Chen Sung (One Thousand Saints) Temple to propagate the Dharma. He passed into Nirvana in 536 A.D., was buried in Shon Er Shan (Bear Ear Mountain) in Ho Nan, and a stupa was built for him in Pao Lin Temple. Later, the Tang dynasty Emperor, Dai Dzong, bestowed on Bodhidharma the name Yuen Che Grand *Ch'an* Master, and renamed his stupa as Kong Kwan (Empty Visualization). <http://sped2work.tripod.com/bdharma.html> 15/06/2003

¹⁶ P. 5, 100 Excerpts from Zen Buddhist Texts, editor Lan-Sheng Jiang, translated by Jane C. C. Lai & Martha P.Y. Cheung, 台灣商務印書館股份有限公司, Taipei, 1998

phenomenon. The artist creates a form/phenomenon in order to describe the essential meaning.

These principles cannot easily therefore be clearly explained through words and forms. They are formless. Or, we can say that words are not enough to describe the “*yi*”. The Tao (the Way of nature) underlies the creation of myriad phenomena, and these will maintain the spirit of the Tao and act in a harmonious state with the Tao. For a being to understand and live within the Tao is the way to free himself from the material world and also a way to understand the fluid processes underlying the universe. As Chuang Tzu suggests in his discussion on making all things equal “*Heaven and Earth were born at the same time I was, and the ten thousand things are one with me.*”¹⁷ To merge oneself and life with the Way it is to enter a state of comprehensive harmony.

When the I-Ching (The Book of Changes — a collection of philosophical statements which can be used as a decision making tool) explains the ontology of the universe, it mentions, “*Words cannot fully described the ‘yi’ mind*” The “*yi*” cannot be fully described by the terminology of language that we are using. In order to make up the deficit in language we have to use or create phenomena to allow us to describe fully the “*yi*”. Although the Tao/Way is formless, we need to create a phenomenon in order to represent it.

As to the general description of *yi jing* in Chinese art as a reciprocal correlation of emotion and objective reality there is not enough consensus of opinion to explain how to correlate this emotional and objective reality. The translation of *yi jing*

¹⁷ P.43, Chapter 2, the Complete Work of Chuang Tzu, translated by Burton Watson, New York, Columbia University Press, 1968

depends upon different persons and times. Nowadays, one could consider “yi” as the artist's personal emotion and equivalent to the artist's “manner” and “jing” as the life experience and physical environment related to the artist. As Zhu Yu-Ming (祝允明) (1460-1526) stated “*the phenomenon rises from the connection between artist and life ‘matter’*. *The emotion arises from the relationship between the artists self and physical reality.*”¹⁸ For the artist therefore the question is posed how can he/she identify his own emotion with the highest creation?

When in the story/fable of “Cook Ting carving an Ox” Chef Ting was carving and cutting an ox for Lord Wei-Hui. Every touch of his body's movement was in a perfect rhythm, as though he were performing the dance of the Mulberry Grove or keeping time to Ching-shou music. “*Oh, Excellent!*” said Lord Wei-Hui. “*The skill should attain such heights!*” Cook Ting replied, “*What your servant cares about is the Way, I have left skill behind me.*”¹⁹

These actions were so quick and excellent without any hesitating, just wonderful as a perfect picture. Experience and emotion merge together to create a complete and true image. In metaphysic terms, skill has been trained to the highest standard and the inner state of the “being” has been concentrated into an “above form” state. Technique has been transcended and become formless and spontaneous. There is no separation of the ox and the cook. For there is no clinging by the cook to his own self to keep himself separate from the world.

The artist creates his/her form, as does the audience, each feeling it with their own interpretation or perception. In other words, artists create by not being separate

¹⁸ P.50, 美學原理綱要, 陽辛,甘霖, 劉榮凱著, 北京大學, 1996

¹⁹ P.63, “Cook Ting carving an Ox”, in Chuang Tzu, the Inner Chapters, translated by A. C. Graham, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1981

from the world (the way things are) and the audience. The artist hopes the audience can feel what he is creating without being or thinking of themselves as being separate from the artist or the work.

The Unification of Emotion and Image

When we have an idea in our mind (*yi*), the idea represents a kind of image or phenomenon (*jing*). Where does the image come from? It comes from what we have been or experienced or felt in our life. It is the phenomenon (*jing*) and is objective matter. We felt or were touched by the scene and then produce a painting or poem to describe the scene. This is described as our mind (*yi*) and subjective matter. When objective matter/phenomenon and subjective matter/mind merge with each other and then create a form the Chinese call this *yi jing*.

Jing can be described as a hoarding together of consciousness and the phenomena of creation. A hoarding of consciousness. For example a whole space is a space which also includes a lot of small spaces and the individual spaces are independent in their own way. In my own view, I see that the whole of interior space includes lots of different small areas. So too the environment, the artwork, the artist and the natural phenomena cannot be separated from each other.

As Wang Fu-Zhi (王夫之) (1619-1692) stated:

*“Phenomenon is created from emotion, and emotion is merged within the phenomenon.”*²⁰

²⁰ P.49, 美學原理綱要, 陽辛, 甘霖, 劉榮凱, 北京大學出版社, 1996

Phenomenon and emotion are unified. When artists create a new “formless” and “wordless” phenomenon, they use “phenomena” as a foundation to create the emotion, experience and understanding of natural objects. Artists create the phenomenon of *yi jing*, and the audience feels the creation and completes the creation of *yi jing*.

Yi jing is not a physical image/phenomenon produced by physical contact only. It also connects with inner feeling. The artist is inspired by the experiences of his daily life. His experiences have an effect upon his emotions and create the expression of the emotional impact through his artistic hand. The production (physical phenomenon) of “merging with emotion” is so profound as to be presented to the artist’s mind as (emptiness phenomenon). Therefore, there are not enough ways for us to describe fully our psychological feeling in words but only to sense it, as in *yi jing*. Words are the path towards understanding. In order to describe the spiritual side of our mind, artistic creations can help us to represent our emotional feeling. We can see from the history of Chinese art that artists have developed a complex aesthetic *yi jing* theory in painting, poetry, sculpture, landscape design, and architecture etc. In each of these forms artists have found spiritual and aesthetic expression of the united harmony of Man and Nature.

Within the meaning of *yi jing* the artist will, for example, merge visual symbols of nature, his/her inner feelings and emotions and factors from his/her external surroundings. What arises from this process will reflect the unity of Man and Nature and will itself have an emotional attachment. This is the aesthetic phenomenon which unifies the artist’s own subjective emotional and objective phenomenon to the unity of the spiritual attachment of the artist to the universe.

Yi jing exists, and flows through our consideration and description of the natural environment. In attempting to refine this essence, from complexity to simplicity, how can one approach *yi jing*? It depends upon the person's experience and disposition.

For the Chinese artist, objective reality and physical and material phenomena must be unified with mind, emotion and the concept of emptiness in order to describe deeply both the vitality of the universe and the truth and reality of being. As Ye Lang²¹ (b.1938) stated in "Chinese aesthetic theory abstract":

*"Yi jing is to express the phenomenon of unity of emptiness and reality not the expression of individual material and image. To express the substance of universe and the Way/Tao of living dynamically."*²²

In order to create an emotion, mind and objective reality are correlated together; substance and emptiness are united within each other.

Being can be captured by an artist who has not only mastered the formal and technical aspects, the technicalities of his medium, but who has also developed a deep understanding of his own nature and the very essence of his being and his relationship to the universe. Yu-Lan Fung (1895-1990) writes that "*Heaven, Earth and Man are the basis of all creation. Heaven produces them, Earth nourishes them, and Man completes them.*"²³ Man (the artist) has to take this great responsibility to

²¹ b.1938, Professor of Philosophy and Aesthetics, at the University of Peking, China

²² P. 4, The *Ch'an*-Aesthetics of Yih-Jung in the theory and practice of Chinese Landscape-Painting, Ying-Chuan Lin, Huaan University, Taipei, 2000

²³ P.122, The Spirit of Chinese Philosophy, Yu-Lan Fung, translated by E.R. Hughes, London, Routledge & K. Paul, 1947

complete what the universe has provided him with.

The Interpretation of *Yi Jing* Theory in Chinese Arts

Throughout the development of Chinese art, Chinese landscape painting²⁴ has been one of the most sophisticated forms for artists to express their subjective emotions and understanding of the objective environment. During the development of Chinese landscape painting a number of aesthetic theories developed such as *yi jing* 意境, *jing jia* 境界, *chi yung* 氣韻 etc. Chinese landscape painting provides examples of how *yi jing* can be interpreted.

Chinese Landscape painting became almost fully developed during the Song (960- 1279), and Yung periods (1271-1368). The Tao concept of the unity of Man and Heaven is well expressed in landscape paintings from the Northern Song period (960-1127). The spirit of natural beauty was translated by the artist's subjective observation and fully presented in landscape painting. For example Guo Shi's 郭熙 (1023-1085) painting "Early Spring" (1072) which presents scenes of the early spring season. This depicts vivid green shoots beginning to emerge from the end of the branches, streams flowing along the mountainside, and mystic mountains out of which express the relationship with infinity. The painting inspires a graceful and magnificent *yi jing*. The beauty of Nature and the artist's empathy with the scenery merge.

The composition of the painting is organised in order to contribute to the *yi jing* of the painting. To arrange the construction of the painting the artist has to construct

²⁴ Chinese landscape painting is a painting that mainly depicts scenes of mountains, rivers and nature. P. 68, 中國美術辭典 The Dictionary of Chinese Arts. Hsiung Shih Art Books Co., LTD. Taipei. 1993

the complex scene and elements into a simple format without losing the essence of the view. The artist must modify his imagination in order to express the purity of understanding. However, *yi jing* is far more than form and phenomena but it cannot be fully expressed without any formal visualization. As mentioned before, landscape painting is the most suitable form for the Chinese artist to represent the concept of the unity of Man and Heaven. The artist creates a landscape painting in order to express the appreciation of his life and self-understanding of *yi jing*. However, when an artist creates a landscape painting, he does not self consciously deliberate on aspects of quality but rather is already within a state of being which is highly charged: he would forget who he is and becomes as one with the process.

For example, the famous poet Wang Wei (701-761) wrote a beautiful poem “The Deer Enclosure” and has described the beauty of emptiness within in his poem.

“ On the bare mountain I met no one,

I only hear the echo of human voices.

Sunlight flickers through the dense wood,

And shines full upon the green moss”²⁵

This is a wonderful example of *yi jing*. Through reading the poem we exercise our imagination to reconstruct his life in the country village, he is showing us his observance and respect for *Ch’an* wisdom. He has used beautiful language to express the bare/emptiness and scenery in his life in a countryside house. He often uses emptiness to express the physical world merged with his life. Also, empty will fully explain the meaning of emptiness in the wisdom of Buddhism. Physical reality

²⁵ P. 378, 300 T’ang Poems, translated by Innes Herdan, Far East Book Co., LTD. Taipei, 1987

is often merged with the meaning of emptiness alongside concepts of calm and serenity. For him, the poems transport himself into the state of a *Ch'an* practitioner. In the processing of his research, the poem gives him a picture and way to represent his emotion and understanding of *Ch'an*.

As we read Wang Wei's poem the scene is illustrated for us in our imagination. We may wonder — is the mountain really empty? No, there must be birds singing, somewhere, and a gentle breeze. Is there a human inside the mountain? Yes, there is somebody there that we cannot see but, we notice the atmosphere is so quiet and empty we can hear an echo come out from the middle of the forest. The *yi jing* of the poem brings to us the corresponding rhythms gathering humans and nature together. The sunlight brings life to the forest, the moss appears in the summer season. Wang Wei has brought into a picture his passion for the world in which he lived, and he has empathised with the entire environment. The poem transmits his mind which is therefore within the phenomenon, and the phenomenon is therefore within the mind. When spiritual reality is entered into, it can be performed equally well by both poetry and painting. As a Sung scholar Su Tung-Po (1037-1101) wrote about Wang Wei "*There is a painting in his poem and a poem in his painting.*" For the audience, the painting or poem he created shows us "*a pure reflection of nature's 'untouched primacy'*"²⁶. I would describe that poetry is a non-colour painting which is poetry without words. Both of them describe a *yi jing* and present emotional contacts from the same aesthetic origin.

Artwork for a Western artist is to produce a separate art object. However artwork for a Chinese artist is to produce an art object inside himself to be produced

²⁶ P.199, Creativity and Taoism, Chung-Yuan Chang, The Julian Press, New York, 1963

immediately the moment it is conceived, particularly in painting which depicts landscape.

***Yi Jing*, the Artist and the Audience**

To create the poetic and aesthetic *yi jing* requires both artist and audience. The artist creates the phenomenon of *yi jing* and invites the audience into this phenomenon to sense the artist's emotional creation.

When the artist is moved by his emotional state and his attachment to his surroundings, he becomes ready to work with these “captured” thoughts and sensations, and is inspired to create in a spontaneous manner. These shifts in consciousness have made the artist perform an action and to make some work — make some creative progress. Secondly, when the audience senses the progress made by the artist, it feels the value of what they have understood about the artwork. Therefore the concept of *yi* (mind) can be understood in two ways. Firstly, from the artist's point of view the *yi* is transferred from the artist's mind to the materials and secondly, the viewer receives the *jing* and interprets the *yi* of the artist through the chosen medium (for example, painting, calligraphy, poetry or garden design). This is understood as a direct transmission of *yi* from the essential nature of the artist to the essential nature of the viewer. The *yi* resonates in the receptive viewer. Although the work of the artist is valid in its own right it can be thought of as completed by its reception and understanding by the viewer.

Chung Tzu has described this in Tao Te Ching, Chapter Two as

“Under heaven all can see beauty as beauty only because there is ugliness.

All can know good as good only because there is evil.

Therefore having and not having arise together.

Difficult and easy complement each other.

Long and short contrast each other:

High and low rest upon each other;

Voice and sound harmonize each other;

Front and back follow one another.”²⁷

This is a clear statement that there is no division in the physical world. Everything has risen together from opposite sides and is completed as one. Artist and audience make the creation complete as one.

Spiritual and Philosophical Aspects

Spirit/Shen 神 in the Chinese tradition could be described as a man living a spiritual life. It is quite different from the Western Christian sense of spirit as described for example by the Holy Spirit. *Shen* is more concerned with wisdom and living within the Taoist “essential” way. As George Rowley²⁸ stated “*(The) Chinese have created a unique conception of the realm of the spirit which was one with the realm of matter.*”²⁹ Painting, calligraphy and other kinds of creativity are intimately connected with the function of religion, philosophy and one’s life. All creativity becomes the Great Way (Tao) for man to manifest thoughts and comprehensions of

²⁷ Tao Te Ching, <http://www.carleton.ca/~rgray/TaoTeChing/> 18/09/2001

²⁸ First half of twentieth century, exact date unobtainable.

²⁹ P. 5, Principles of Chinese Painting, George Rowley, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1959

the universe. Chinese art focuses on the expression of the essence (*Shen*) of the subject by using artistic phenomena. It also emphasizes how an artist expresses his response to, and connection with, the subject translating this into an artistic form. This concept applies to most types of Chinese art such as painting, sculpture, calligraphy, garden design and architecture. For example, when drawing a landscape, the painting represents the beauty of the scenery and the different seasons; when making figurative painting it is important to catch the essential spirit and character of the people; the concept remains the same when birds and flowers are the subject.

When an artist creates an artwork, it is part of the artist and the artist is within the artwork. When the artist is making the artwork the artist uses his hand and his whole body is involved with the artwork. The idea comes through the heart via the hand into materials. Traditionally Chinese artists identify with living within the universe and seek to communicate with all things. The “*Chinese sage grasps the truth in a flash, so the painter in the grip of inspiration finds his own truth with a single stroke of the brush.*”³⁰ Any hesitation or break in the middle of action will cause damage to the painting, even “kill” the painting. Chinese painting thus achieves a spiritual content through the response of the artist to the essential character of the subject caught in immediate, direct gestures which complete the painting in a single session.

The creation of the artwork shows the evidence of the artist’s own spirit: the artwork has contained the whole energy of the artist’s strength, both mental and physical. The artwork is an expression of the artists’ *Ch’i* and *Shen* (energy and spirit), as George Rowley described the spirit in the Principles of Chinese Painting:

³⁰ P. 403, The Japanese influence on Western art since 1858. Japonism, Siegfried Wichman, Thames & Hudson Ltd. London, 1981

*“In painting, chi yun grows out of the wanderings of the heart; it is obtained through the inspiration of heaven. It is not born of the genius of the artist who is only the instrument of heaven.”*³¹

From an oriental viewpoint, the mind and body are not separate and the fundamental concerns of the mind are ultimately spiritual. The mind is more concerned at a spiritual level, but comes from a person's body. How can we really understand this spiritual dimension that words and language cannot fully describe? We can use language and words as a vehicle to carry the feeling. But, to understand the feeling we have first to learn words and language. Without them the meaning would be inexpressible and unintelligible. The words and the language are like the ministers whilst feeling or emotion is like the king. Without the ministers we are unable to talk to the king.

As Master Sheng-Yen (b.1930) explains in an illustration of seeing the ultimate truth:

“In the Ch'an tradition, the ultimate truth is sometimes compared to the moon, and the conventional truth to a finger pointing at the moon. Someone seeing the moon points in order to show it to people who haven't seen it yet. If they look at the finger, not the moon, they are not getting it. The finger is not the moon. Words, language, ideas, and concepts are like the finger; they can express only the secondary truth, but they can point to the ultimate truth. The ultimate truth is called mind, intrinsic nature,

³¹ Principles of Chinese Painting, George Rowley, Princeton University Press, 1959

*or Buddha nature. It is something everyone must experience personally. It can never be described.”*³²

We can therefore understand that painting (as a conventional truth that points toward the ultimate truth) in itself is important only as a vehicle to get to the ultimate truth that we carry around with us but do not realise that we have. However it is the painting with its formal beauty that carries the *yi* from the artists that unlocks the door to correct understanding and connection with the essential nature of the artist and our selves. It is a matter of internal– (artist) and external– (the creation) and the environment.

As an abstract expressionist Harold Rosenberg (1906-1978) described, “*A painting that is an act, is inseparable from the biography of the artist. The painting itself is a ‘moment’ in the adulterated mixture of his life.*”³³ He also marks out every single touch on the artists’ canvas as an intense inner experience. It is himself and is internal. The language of form can present him as an external performance. As Rosalind E. Krauss stated the meanings that were read into abstract-expressionism depend on the analogy between the inaccessibility of illusionistic space and an intense experience of the privacy of the individual self.³⁴

We have to feel the existence of spirit and mind by our deep understanding and self-experience. There is an example from the history of Buddhism³⁵ which shows

³² Subtle Wisdom – Understanding Suffering, Cultivating Compassion Through Ch’an Buddhism, Master Sheng-Yen, Dharma Drum Publications, Taipei, 1999

³³ P. 256, Passages in Modern Sculpture, Rosalind E. Krauss, MIT Press, Cambridge, 13th printing, 1999

³⁴ P. 256, Passages in Modern Sculpture, Rosalind E. Krauss, MIT Press, Cambridge, 13th printing, 1999

³⁵ The founder of Buddhism, born over twenty-six hundred years ago as a prince of the small kingdom of the Shakya clan in what is now Nepal. P. 10, introduction, Subtle Wisdom, understanding suffering, cultivating compassion through *Ch’an* Buddhism, Dharma Drum Publications, Taipei, 1999

us how spirit might be understood without language. Shakyamuni Buddha holds a lotus blossom (symbol of purity) which he is offered by his follower and teaches the highest Dharma (wisdom). There followed a long silence as the people waited for him to speak. In this stillness and silence, Maha kashyapa smiling quietly stood up putting his hands together in the middle of the crowd. Understanding, Shakyamuni Buddha transmitted the Dharma to Maha kashyapa, the first “patriarch” of *Ch’an* (meaning that he recognised Maha kashyapa’s realization of enlightenment). Subtle wisdom transmitted directly, communication by understanding, without writing words: a “silent sermon”. This story is famous in *Ch’an* Buddhism because it shows the principle of understanding directly through one’s own experience. It is the same as the transmission of creation. The audience feel the essence of creation directly through their personal experience.

The Relationship between the Artist and the Environment

One of the Taoist’s essential thoughts was centred on the 無 *Wu* (nothingness or emptiness). In Lao Tzu’s, emptiness is the awareness of the idea of mother, female, and mystical womb is closely associated with that of emptiness. The void, the space which nurtures everything. “*The space between Heaven and Earth is like a bellows. It is empty, but gives a supply that never fails; when it is in motion, it never stops producing.*”³⁶ This emptiness is like the symbol of a bellows. It is efficient in producing breath at any time.

Similarly *Ch’an* Buddhism’s point of view is that no observation of physical phenomena is emptiness. To be empty is to be free from all attachment of the individual distinction of things. To be pure as a lotus blossom which comes out of

³⁶ Chapter 5, Lao Tzu

the dirty mud but has never been touched by it. Let me quoted D.T. Suzuki's explanation *"There is no such thing as movement inside emptiness. You cannot be in one specific point in a void or in any part of the void."*³⁷

Moreover, In Chuang Tzu's description:

When Yen Hui (521B.C.-481B.C.) asked, *"May I ask what the fasting of the mind is? Confucius replied, "Make your will one! Don't listen with your ears, listen with your mind. No, don't listen with your mind, but listen with your spirit. Listening stops with the ears, the mind stops with recognition, but spirit is empty and waits on all things. The way gathers in emptiness alone. Emptiness is the fasting of the mind."*³⁸

Buddha Shakyamuni elaborated this wisdom further to his disciples in the Heart Sutra:

*"The material world is not different from emptiness;
emptiness is not different from the material world.
The material world is therefore emptiness,
and emptiness is therefore the material world."*³⁹

The material world can be described as physical phenomenon. The physical phenomenon is emptiness and the emptiness is physical phenomenon. The material world could be real because we observe it from what we visualized. The immaterial which seems not real but it surrounds us in our environment by which we sense it.

³⁷ P. 70, Ch'an and Art, D. T. Suzuki, 劉大悲譯, Hea Venly Lotus Publishing Co., LTD. Taipei, 1994

³⁸ P. 54, Chuang Tzu, Basic writings, translated by Burton Watson, Columbia University Press, 1964

³⁹ P. 19, Heart Sutra, translated by E E Ho, Ph.D. & W. L. Rathje. Ph.D, Asiapac Books, Singapore, 1997

This is the concept which guides the artist to consider the true state of his/her subject and ultimately realise the emptiness of all phenomena through the making of the work, and thus give the viewer of the work an insight into the harmonious unity of “I” (the essential nature of the artist him/herself) and “Nature” (heaven and earth). Ultimately, there is no separation between the “I” (individual being) and the environment.

As Hui-Neng (613-718) stated in the chapter on Prajna (The Sutra of Hui-Neng) *“Everything is one, the one is everything.”* According to Buddhist philosophy the concept of an individual egocentric self that exists independently from the rest of the world is false and deluded. *“Heaven, Earth and man are a Trinity.”*⁴⁰ The universe and man are part of each other; each cannot really complete its task without the other. As Chuang Tzu once described; the skilled woodcarver, the skilled butcher, the skilled swimmer does not ponder or ratiocinate on the course of action he should take; his skill has become so much a part of him that he merely acts instinctively and spontaneously and, and without knowing why, achieves success.

The “I”, according to this philosophy, is therefore the essential nature of the artist himself, and because there is no separation between the essential nature of one’s own self and others, it is also the essential nature of the audience. Through viewing the work the audience is invited to intuitively to be able to understand the artist by connecting to the universe through the artist’s creation. *“Chinese philosophy has one main tradition, one main stream of thought. This tradition is that it aims at a particular kind of highest life. But this kind of highest life, high though it*

⁴⁰ P. 122, The Spirit of Chinese philosophy, Yu- Lan Fung, translated by E.R.Hughes, London. Routledge & K. Paul, 1947

*is, is not divorced from the daily functioning of human relations.”*⁴¹ Through viewing the work the audience is able intuitively to perceive and understand the artist’s expression of the universe because the artist has produced his work from that place in him that is fundamentally of the same true nature as that of the viewer.

It must be understood therefore that the artist is not expressing himself from the viewpoint of the ego or the emotionally turbulent self that stands as separated from the world, but instead from a place that transcends this view and is in fact the true emptiness, selflessness or unborn, undying true nature of the universe. *“A man may be nothing more than a creature of unquestioning natural instincts. He may be without thought even of his own existence. Unreflectively, he follows his natural tendency, or his personal habits, or the customs of the society in which he lives. He just acts as he does without understanding why he acts so, and indeed without being conscious that his actions are what they are. This sphere of human life is the sphere of human innocence.”*⁴²

As Ch’an master Sheng-Yen stated *“In the Buddhist view, the ‘I’ individual and the environment are inseparable. One has to understand and experience ‘no self’ by himself. Even the understanding and experiencing of inseparability of the self and environment, are all impermanent.”*⁴³

The above quote may suggest to the artist or audience to focus upon the very moment that they are experiencing the creation of the artwork. Be part of the creation and be part of experiencing of yourself and your environment.

⁴¹ P. 3, *The Spirit of Chinese philosophy*, Yu-Lan Fung, translated by E.R.Hughes, London, Routledge & K. Paul, 1947

⁴² P. xiii, *The Spirit of Chinese philosophy*, Yu-Lan Fung, translated by E.R.Hughes, London, Routledge & K. Paul, 1947

⁴³ P. 12, *Subtle Wisdom*, Master Sheng-Yen, Dharma Drum Publications, Taipei, 1999

As ancient Chinese artists noticed emptiness and reality cannot exist without with each other. *Ch'an* Buddhism has emphasized, "*my way is taught through the mind, not through the written word.*"⁴⁴ It tells us do not persist with the meaning of language. A single sentence or word will limit our thoughts and muddle our mind and confuse us in searching for the essence of self-nature.

In *Ch'an's* concept, the beauty of emptiness is not only expressing the phenomenon of emptiness but also the reality. Emptiness has to cooperate with reality in order to fully express the message of beauty. The phenomenon of emptiness combined with the phenomenon of reality has to become an integrated phenomenon.

I have studied where *yi jing* originally developed from, and have discussed the character of *yi jing* in relation to art, Chinese landscape painting, the relationship with *Ch'an*, and the interpretation of the artist and the audience, and the relationship between the artist and the environment. In the following chapter, I wish to look into the history and development of *Ch'an*, and where *Ch'an* has been influential in Chinese art.

⁴⁴ P. 5, 100 Excerpts from Zen Buddhist texts, editor Lan-Sheng Jiang, translated by Jane C. C. Lai & Martha P.Y. Cheung. 台灣商務印書館, Lit. Taipei, 1998

Chapter 2

Ch'an and Art

In this chapter I will consider the relationship between *Ch'an* and art. There is a significant connection between *Ch'an* and artistic creation: *Ch'an* provides personal spiritual resources and emphasizes personal awareness, it includes concepts of immediacy and impermanence – all of these relate to the artist's personal inspiration (internal situation) and artistic creation (external situation).

Ch'an originated with the ancient Indian Buddhist “*dhyana*” (contemplation) sects.⁴⁵ It is a wisdom shared between Man and Nature. The great Indian teacher Bodhidharma originally introduced this wisdom into China in 526 A.D.⁴⁶ The mental discipline and spiritual practices of *dhyana*, which are aimed at attainment of an absorbed state of mind through concentration, was common to many Indian religions, including Hinduism and Buddhism, and are also used in current forms of Yoga.

During the centuries of cross-cultural processes, the original Indian *Ch'an* merged with Chinese classic philosophy to gradually become the *Ch'an* Buddhism with which we are familiar today. The seeds of *Ch'an* were sown into the field of Chinese philosophy and merged spontaneously with native Chinese Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism. It became identified with living with nature and as such inspired many Chinese artists.

⁴⁵ Collier's Encyclopedia 23, P. F. Collier, P.F. Collier & Son LIT. 1994

⁴⁶ <http://www.zenmind.com/bodhidharma.html> 16/09/2001

What is *Ch'an*?

*“If you want to understand Ch'an 禪 (Chinese pronounced Ch'an, Japanese pronounced Zen. The character remained the same), understand it right away without deliberation, without turning your head this way or that. For while you are doing this, the object you have been seeking is no longer there.”*⁴⁷ What is *Ch'an*?

Throughout the centuries to the present time, many people have sought enlightenment through *Ch'an Koans* 公案 (*Koans* are examples of *Ch'an* masters' speeches on philosophic discussions, conversations between master and monk, or a question given by a master. These discussions and conversations are methods to help the followers to understand what *Ch'an* is) and *Ch'an* meditation practice. A way of looking at this is described well by Master Sheng-Yen, *“In Ch'an tradition, the ultimate truth is sometimes compared to the moon, and the conventional truth to a finger pointing at the moon. Someone seeing the moon points in order to show it to people who haven't seen it yet. If they look at the finger, not the moon, they are not getting it. The finger is not the moon. Words, language, ideas and concepts are like the finger; they can express only the secondary truth, but they can point to the ultimate truth.”*⁴⁸ By practicing *Ch'an* with full personal involvement, going beyond the ego without any deliberate purpose, what the Taoist's call *wu wei* (non-action), only then will the relationship between man and the universe merge spontaneously and enlightenment be achieved. However, enlightenment is achieved at different and progressive levels dependent upon personal potential and training.

“Zen is rather a form of thought, or better, a mode of thinking that gives rise to a

⁴⁷ P. 360, *Zen and Japanese Culture*, D. T. Suzuki, Princeton University Press, 1973

⁴⁸ *Subtle Wisdom – Understanding Suffering, Cultivating Compassion Through Ch'an Buddhism*, Master Sheng-Yen, Dharma Drum Publications, Taipei, 1999

certain way of acting.”⁴⁹ All the written words are just a reference for us to explain this complex thought and are used as a tool to prepare the mind for enlightenment. *Ch’an* is a wisdom which cannot be transmitted by any form of language but only by mind understanding.

Ch’an also denies logical thought. As D. T. Suzuki (1870-1966) stated “*Zen is not focused on either abstract thought or an idealistic logical way of thinking*”⁵⁰ The logical mind is not the way to understand the truth of nature. Logical thought is only a key to open the door of our mind and one has to enter and experience it by oneself. Dualism, as in objectivity and subjectivity, or the soul and the body no longer exist once the mind has been opened in this way – the salt dissolves and becomes part of the water.

Although *Ch’an* has branched into different schools over time the fundamental concepts remain the same. One may carry out different orthodox practices such as *ZaCh’an* (sitting meditation), *Koan* in order to achieve the single golden goal of attuning the self into enlightenment.

As *Ch’an* master Sheng-Yen explained “*Ch’an is a method of spiritual practice. Ch’an is wondrous and subtle, inexplicable wisdom. Ch’an is all phenomena.*”⁵¹ For example, a drop of rain falling onto a leaf (what it looks like, its sound, its smell...) can be part of the process of enlightenment. There are no distinctions between phenomena: forms, creatures, human beings are the same. There is no other way to achieve the reality of Truth without being actually merged with the phenomenal

⁴⁹ P. 1, *Reading Zen in the Rocks*, Francois Berthier, translated and with a philosophical essay by Graham Parkers, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, 2000

⁵⁰ P. 32, *Zen and Art*, D. T. Suzuki, translated by 劉大悲, Hea Venly Lotus Publishing Co., LTD. Taipei, 1994

⁵¹ P. 15, *Subtle Wisdom*, Master Sheng-Yen, Dharma Drum Publications, Taipei, 1999

world.

The Taoist Lieh-Tzu stated:

“My body is in accord with my mind, my mind with my energies, my energies with my spirit, my spirit with nothing.” and “Only then, when I had come to the end of everything inside me and outside me, my eyes became like my ears, my ears like my nose, my nose like my mouth; everything was the same. My mind concentrated and my body relaxed, bones and flesh fused completely, I did not notice what my body leaned against and my feet trod, I drifted with the wind East or West, like a leaf from a tree or a dry husk, and never knew whether it was the wind that rode me or I that rode the wind.”⁵²

Ch'an emphasizes finding out about one's true-self through enlightenment. It presents an understanding of the true-self as existing in an ever-changing world. From such impermanent phenomena, one goes through different methods of study to seek the ultimate truth without dwelling on logical thought or idealistic thinking. One becomes a part of the surrounding environment achieving enlightenment through simple action.

A Personal Interpretation of the Unity of *Ch'an* and Art

Chinese art grew out of a combination of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism with the most significant influence being that of *Ch'an* Buddhism. Over the course of time *Ch'an* thought has merged with Chinese culture and has not only influenced

⁵² P. 7, The Book of Lieh-Tzu, A. C. Graham, London, 1960

Chinese painting but also literature, poetry, garden design, music and the tea ceremony. As such its achievements and impact have been significant and considerable.

As one *Ch'an* master and artist XiaoYun 曉雲法師 (b.1912) stated "*Ch'an* was a most significant wisdom which directly converged the concepts of Confucians, Buddhism and Taoism. *Ch'an* has achieved the *yi jing* of creation mind and *Ch'an* heart as one part with each other."⁵³ As such *Ch'an* took Chinese aesthetics onto a profound plain.

The logical scientific philosophy of the west is very different to Chinese *Ch'an* philosophy which combines inner sense and external matter. This merging is essential in the field of Eastern art. Ideally, *Ch'an* philosophy considers a very close relationship between internal sense and external matter. So as a *Ch'an* creator I aim to come together with my materials in a harmonious and spontaneous way. I become part of the creation which includes the preparation of everything before I start, the cleaning of the table, the grinding of the ink myself; the tidying of the brushes and placing into position. I calm my mind and prepare for the activity. I sense the dignity of the creative process. According to *Ch'an* masters the mind and the universe have to be united in an harmonious way, the mind merges with the landscape and the creation becomes an act of self-expression.

Ch'an encourages us to be part of nature. It encourages opening our mind and being an observer in order to accept all phenomena. *Ch'an* tells us to become a bamboo and to become a leaf in the end of a branch. Why does *Ch'an* tell us to do

⁵³ The *Yi jing* Aesthetic Theory of *Ch'an*, 禪的意境美學, 賴賢宗
<http://ns.hfu.edu.tw/~shenchon/04> , 20/11/2000

this? Because one will not see the eternal truth if one has to live far away from all phenomena.

As Ch'an master Hui Kai wrote *"There are flowering blossoms in the spring and the moon is bright in the autumn. There is a summer breezing and snowing in the wintertime. If there are no worries in mind, it must be a wonderful time in our living world."*⁵⁴ In the development of Chinese arts, art never become really separate from the experience of living. Living with the entire world has been stressed in those theories and books. In painting, we can view the concept of Heaven, Earth and Man as being one whole. Artists would invoke this spirit of unity within themselves. For a great work they would need to be highly skilful and have purity of understanding in order to be able to express this reality of internal sense and external form.

As D. T. Suzuki stated:

*"The artist's world is a freely creative place which can only be produced from the immediate moment of observation of physical phenomena and will not be limited by the barrier of the physical senses and intellectual thinking. The artist himself/herself created the image and sound from the state of emptiness and non-sound. In this state, the world between the artist and Ch'an are unified."*⁵⁵

When as an artist I start to create a piece of art in a space, the conversation between the space, artwork and myself actually starts immediately the creation starts.

⁵⁴ P. 308, *Painting, Aesthetic and Ch'an Buddhism*, 程至的, 中國文聯出版社, 1999

⁵⁵ P. 33, *Zen and Art*, D.T. Suzuki, translated by 劉大悲, Hea Venly Lotus Publishing Co., LTD. Taipei, 1994

The space starts to change when I bring material into it. I can see this happen straight away and this provides an opportunity and a challenge to consciously understand the immediacy of realisation. As D.T. Suzuki stated, “*Man is a thinking reed but his great works are done when he is not calculating and thinking.*”⁵⁶ From a *Ch’an* perspective creativity will be of a high order when the artist works with an absence of self-consciousness, as a child draws, with a strong, immediate and powerful connection to everything around him.

I would like to consider another distinguishing feature of *Ch’an*, that of impermanence. Impermanence has a particular relevance to the artistic process. When sunlight is shining on an object, the light gives shadow to the object and brings weight and physical reality to the object immediately. The light constantly changes from time to time. Nothing remains the same. Sheng-Yen described, “*No two things in the world are really identical. When seen from a distance, things may appear to be the same, but upon closer observation one inevitably finds that they are not.*”⁵⁷ Consequences such as light and distance make things change all the time. As a grand master stated “*nothing in the world is permanent. Everything is impermanent. It is not just that this is true most of the time. Nor that it is a truism to be considered alongside an equally valid notion of stability. Everything is always impermanent.*”⁵⁸ When a thing is impermanent, there is a truth. The light brings out the existence of the object.

Space too is constantly changing all the time. How do we consider space? When the artist is working in an area of space, the space is also within the artist. The

⁵⁶ P. viii, *Zen in the Art of Archery*, Eugen Herrigel, Vintage Books Edition, New York, 1989

⁵⁷ P. 6, *Subtle Wisdom*, Master Sheng-Yen, Dharma Drum Publications, Taipei, 1999

⁵⁸ P. 7, *Subtle Wisdom*, Master Sheng-Yen, Dharma Drum Publications, Taipei, 1999

creative act reminds him of the action of performing and changing. Space and time are changing continuously and are not separate from other phenomena, which are also impermanent. The whole environment keeps changing by natural processes, e.g. changes of light conditions, rises and falls in temperature, and these affecting other aspects such as colour, depth, sound and so on.

Everything is constantly changing, the cycle of action and consequence is continuing infinitely as *Ch'an* master Sheng-Yen's wrote: "*Each of our thoughts and actions is born and dies, and each action creates the seeds of consequences which will ripen in the future and give rise to new conditions of existence.*"⁵⁹

When an artist's creations are completed, the soul, the thoughts of the artist are left behind. In that time the artist was being the space. The space still changes outside the artists mind. The whole creation continues to move towards a new condition of existence.

When one observes an artwork and pays attention, there is a moment when we meet the artwork. We observe the influence of the situation, the changing of position and time; we understand and touch every single moment of connection. The connection is born and dies, rises and is gone. The understanding changes at every moment.

With *Ch'an*, understanding the intrinsic nature of the world and ourselves changes all the time. Our minds, bodies, and everything around us are continually being born and dying. There is no permanence. The impermanence is the key to understanding the teaching of *Ch'an*.

⁵⁹ P. 10, Subtle Wisdom, Master Sheng-Yen, Dharma Drum Publications, Taipei, 1999

An artist's physical attachment to the space is short term. The period of time the artist is in the space will close up when the artist leaves, but the concepts, the thoughts and his own spirit will be unconsciously carried through into the future through the working of cause and effect. The impact between the creative work, the audience and the environment even though very small, means that the audience will "understand" it. For instance, perception can begin when an audience sees the artwork, and by observing the artwork, a little appreciation and understanding will develop, just as a newborn baby will someday grow into an adult. So too, the seeds of concepts born as a consequence of understanding mean that appreciation will eventually blossom, and when it blossoms in action and thought, this will be a new concept of the artwork.

Chapter 3

The Chinese and Japanese Garden

In chapters one and two I have described key concepts of *Ch'an* and *yi jing* and discussed them in relation to the artistic process. In this Chapter I wish to extend the discussion to traditional forms of Chinese and Japanese gardens. These garden designs could be considered to be the most successful combination of philosophy, poetry and landscape, and thus can provide useful illustrations when considering the theory of *yi jing*.

As I have discussed in the first chapter *yi jing* is found in the achievement of imaginative and transformative qualities in the artists' creation, and I have also pointed out its strong connection with Nature. The garden designer can be seen to be an artist who likewise employs various natural elements to create a poetic *yi jing* in the garden. As a painter might transform the presentation of *yi jing* within a landscape subject so the garden designer will achieve the same within a three-dimensional environmental reality of rocks, trees and water. Traditional Chinese and Japanese gardens provide the opportunity of a study of *yi jing* aesthetics applied to an "assemblage" in real space and as such has a clear connection to the discussion of contemporary environmental and installation practice in Chapters four.

The presentation of the Chinese garden and Japanese *Ch'an* garden design is to involve the observation and participation of the audience. In a unified environment, the audience would be able to experience the unification of Man and Nature. This chapter will also be examining the relationship between landscape painting and garden design, and also *yi jing* theory applied to these two styles of garden design.

The gardener creates a garden in a limited space or a site-specific space which would be relevant to the site-specific installation. The difference is in the materials, the cultural content and the poetic concepts behind the phenomena.

The Chinese Garden

“...the wise man looks into space, and does not regard the small as too little, nor the great as too big; for he knows that there is no limit to dimensions.”⁶⁰

Lao Tzu

From the viewpoint of Chinese philosophy the *“four directions, heaven and earth are named as space, the past, future and present and are named as time”⁶¹*. The cosmos is constructed by space and time. Time is constructed in a single line. *Ch’an* emphasizes that each single period is appreciated in a single moment. Space holds a lot of small single spaces and it also holds all phenomena in time. A garden is a cosmos.

Therefore the whole of the universe can be modelled in a small space such as a garden: indeed, with the right tools to observe, such a universe could be represented upon the surface of a mustard seed. The Chinese landscape garden is an open space arrangement with an aesthetic concept behind it and constructed in a limited area. It is also to be understood as an invitation to the individual to experience.

⁶⁰ P. 124, The Family of Man, the greatest photographic exhibition of all time- 503 pictures from 68 countries- created by Edward Steichen for the Museum of Modern Art, Jerry Mason, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1955

⁶¹ P. 273, Garden and Chinese Culture 園林與中國文化, 王 毅著, 上海人民出版社, 上海, 1991

The Chinese had three great schools of philosophy in their tradition, and these philosophies, Buddhism, Confucianism⁶², and Taoism strongly influenced garden design. Each school has their own concepts and these are important for garden designers to consider. Garden design has also been influenced by Chinese aesthetic traditions. A garden was created to represent a poem or a painting. However, the Chinese landscape garden would allow a viewer to participate and give the observer his/her own experience. Walking into a garden would give us as much pleasure as enjoying a poem or a painting.

In ancient history, the emperors built landscape gardens of many different formats, for personal enjoyment such as the hunting park. Those gardens or parks usually contained hills and lakes, and were located on large areas of land. For example, the emperor, Sui Yang Ti built his Western Park In the year A.D.607. This huge landscape park contained earthwork hills and irregular shaped rocks (representing mountains), and huge lakes (representing seas). The idea of using lakes to represent the sea has appeared in both Chinese and Japanese gardens, and was translated into different elements and interpretations in later developments. This imaginative idea spread into different areas but with a similar purpose. (Later on, Chinese landscape painting took over this symbolic concept of the empty space that exists in the untouched areas.) The hilly islands may represent the ancient Chinese mystic belief of the islands of the immortals. However, the Chinese garden symbolized the integration of “Earth and Heaven” which was a new geometric

⁶² Confucianism was founded by Confucius, 551 B.C. - 478 B.C., in the “Spring and Autumn” and “Warring States” periods, 722BC- 221BC. Confucianism is a philosophy of humanity, that is centred in “Jen” 仁 - benevolence - to care about others. Confucianism impacted on the established class system of Chinese civilization, the Chinese political and institutional systems. Confucianism believed that society would function better if the people respected laws and behaved according to their position in life. The people obey the King, sons obey fathers, and women obey husbands. The Analects is the name of the book which contains Confucius’s teaching.

format. It was a land art, an environment art, created in a traditional Chinese aesthetic style.

Historical events during different dynasties led to key changes in Chinese culture most relevant here being changes in the relationship to nature, and of spiritual awareness caused by the exploits of the Northern Barbarians.⁶³ By moving down from Northern into Southern China, the Northern Barbarians caused the migrations of Chinese people to move into the South and West several times. The change of scenery from the drier, flatter land of Northern China to the mountains and hills of the South was critical to a change in the Chinese relationship to the natural world. This movement represented an exile from the city and a more “man-made” environment. It can be argued that this change of way of life also led to a greater spiritual emphasis in their life. The Chinese mind consciously moved from the mood of the man-made world into a natural philosophical spiritual world. The Southern country with its green mountains and hills attracted those scholars and civilians that helped to develop Chinese culture. The great painter and scholar K'ai-Chih Ku (AD.344-406) wrote this impression of the Southern scenery and we can understand how the beauty of landscape attracted the Chinese.

“A thousand cliffs vie in beauty,

Ten thousand gorges compete in their rushing [water].

The grasses and trees which screen them

⁶³ Five barbarian tribes' invaded China (五胡亂華), between 304-439 AD. Five Barbarians (Wu Hu) (including Tartars, Mongols, and Turkics) is the term used to describe those non-Chinese tribes during the period from the Han Dynasty (202BC-AD220) to the Northern Dynasties (AD386-581). These nomadic tribes originally lived outside the north of China and gradually inhabited the northern border area which was governed by Han Chinese people. Eventually, these non-Chinese tribes invaded China due to the weakness of the Eastern Han Dynasty and the Three Kingdoms (AD25-280), and occupied China north of the river Yangzi.

*Are like rising clouds and dense vapours.”*⁶⁴

Those people who enjoyed this scenery would build villages near the mountains and riversides. Bamboos, lotuses, willows, clouds, streams and rocks, a paradise for a nature-lover would surround the residences and palaces. The beauty of their surroundings alleviated emotional and physical suffering. I quote Tsung Ping's (AD375-443) statement, which says “*Landscapes have a material existence, and yet reach into a spiritual domain.*”⁶⁵ Landscape painting helped the Chinese to recreate their memories of the land in the North, and also helped develop a Southern scenery landscape painting, which brought their ideas towards the concept of “nothingness”. (please refer back to Chapter one)

Chinese Landscape Painting and the Chinese Garden

The principle concepts behind Chinese landscape painting (Shansui Huah), Chinese poetry and Chinese landscape gardening are very similar: they each use a different format to present a sense of landscape space. Chinese ink painting uses the brush to create a sense of open space, presenting a three-dimensional space in a two-dimensional format. Poetry uses words to describe the feeling of landscape scenery, it is space and sound. Chinese gardens utilise stones, plants and water, to present a kind of miniaturised version of landscape which itself becomes part of the natural world which surrounds it thus marrying “real” and “artistic” space.

The Chinese landscape designer can be likened to a performer on stage. The performer utilizes the space on stage to the full and by performing various

⁶⁴ P. 50, The World of Japanese Garden, Loraine Kuck, John Weatherhill Inc. New York and Tokyo, 1984

⁶⁵ P. 50, The World of Japanese Garden, Loraine Kuck, John Weatherhill Inc. New York and Tokyo, 1984

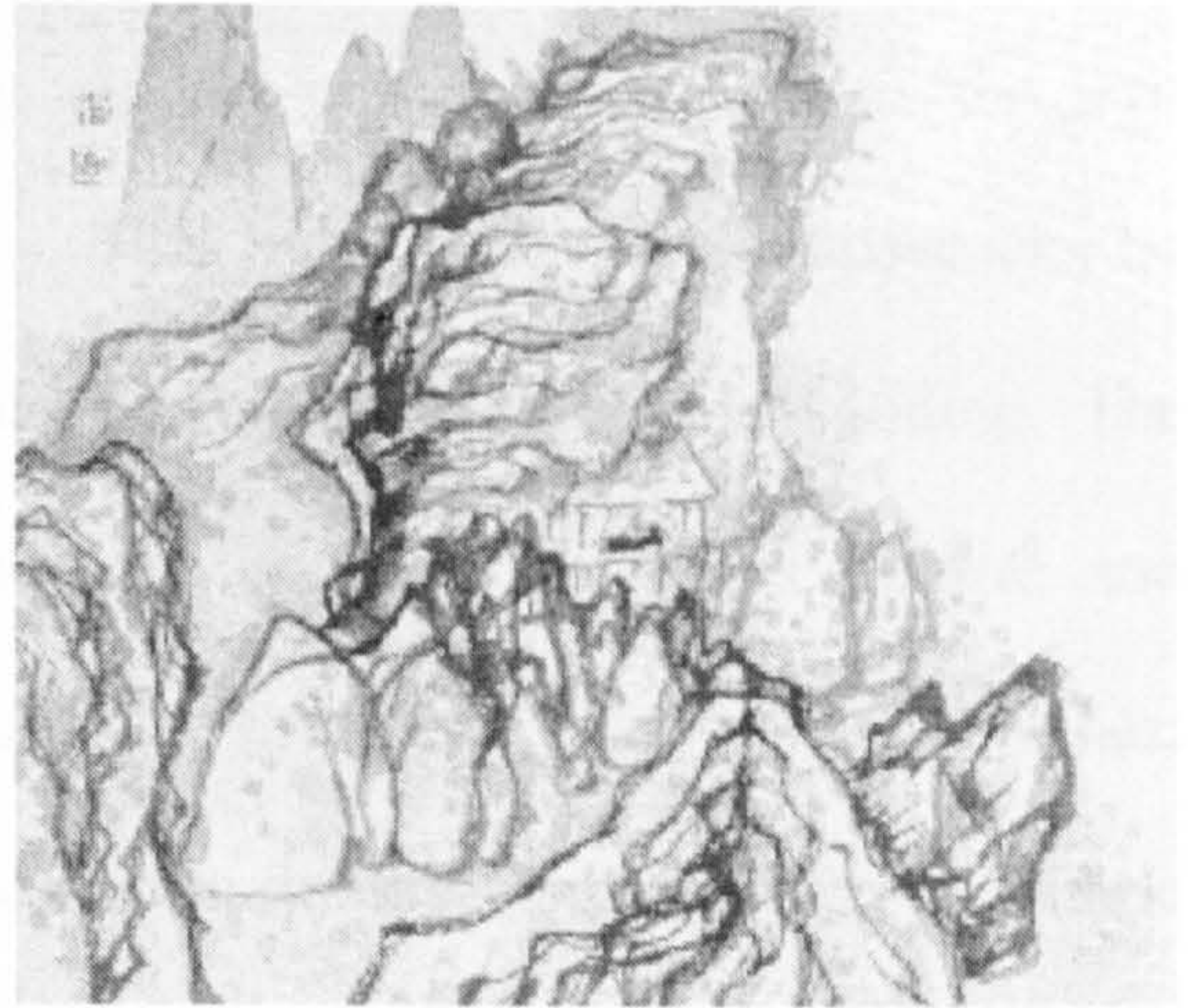
movements and actions conveys emotion. These manoeuvres convey to the audience the illusion of life. It is the same when we apply this concept to the Chinese landscape garden. The garden designer employs a number of natural elements to create a representation of nature within a limited space. As Yang Hong-Xun 楊鴻勳 (b.1931) described “*The performance in theatre causes the story to come alive, and the scenery of garden art mirrors the phenomena of nature.*”⁶⁶

The concepts of landscape painting and gardening are intermixed and a greater understanding of them can be achieved by considering the philosophical principle behind these two forms of representing nature. To the Chinese people, a landscape painting demonstrates respect for nature to such an extent that they see nature as something to be worshiped. The viewer’s experience of both painting and landscape is similar – the painting is the landscape, the landscape is the painting.

The way of creating a landscape painting shows us how the Chinese understood nature, the universe and the deep interaction between themselves and the world. Chinese painters use brush, rice paper, and ink to express their concepts, and show their compassion and understanding of nature. The garden creator takes rocks, water, trees and the ideology of poems and paintings to create three-dimensional forms to represent memories of his lifetime and personal experience of his own culture. A garden represents something more significant than the character of rock or plants becoming a connection to the previous and present world.

⁶⁶ P. 49, The Magazine of Culture 文物月刊, No. 11, 文物出版社, 北京, 1982

Chinese landscape paintings are ideally conceived upon “moving focus” principles and also emphasise the composition or the relationship of emptiness and reality, major and minor, and secondary and principal. Those concepts would apply to garden design as well. The subsidiary decorative aspects highlight attention to the principle subject creating a sense of complete unity. Moreover, there were some Chinese artists who were painters as well as garden designers, for example, in the Tang Dynasty, Wang Wei 王維 (701-761) constructed Grass Cottage as



1. Shi Tao, *A man in a House beneath a Cliff*. Nu Wa Chai Collection

his private garden. In the Yuan Dynasty, Ni Zan (1306-1374) designed Lion Grove Garden famous for its lion-like stone grove. In the early Ch'ing Dynasty, Shi Tao (1642-1718) constructed his artificial mountain garden and this has similarities to his painting style.

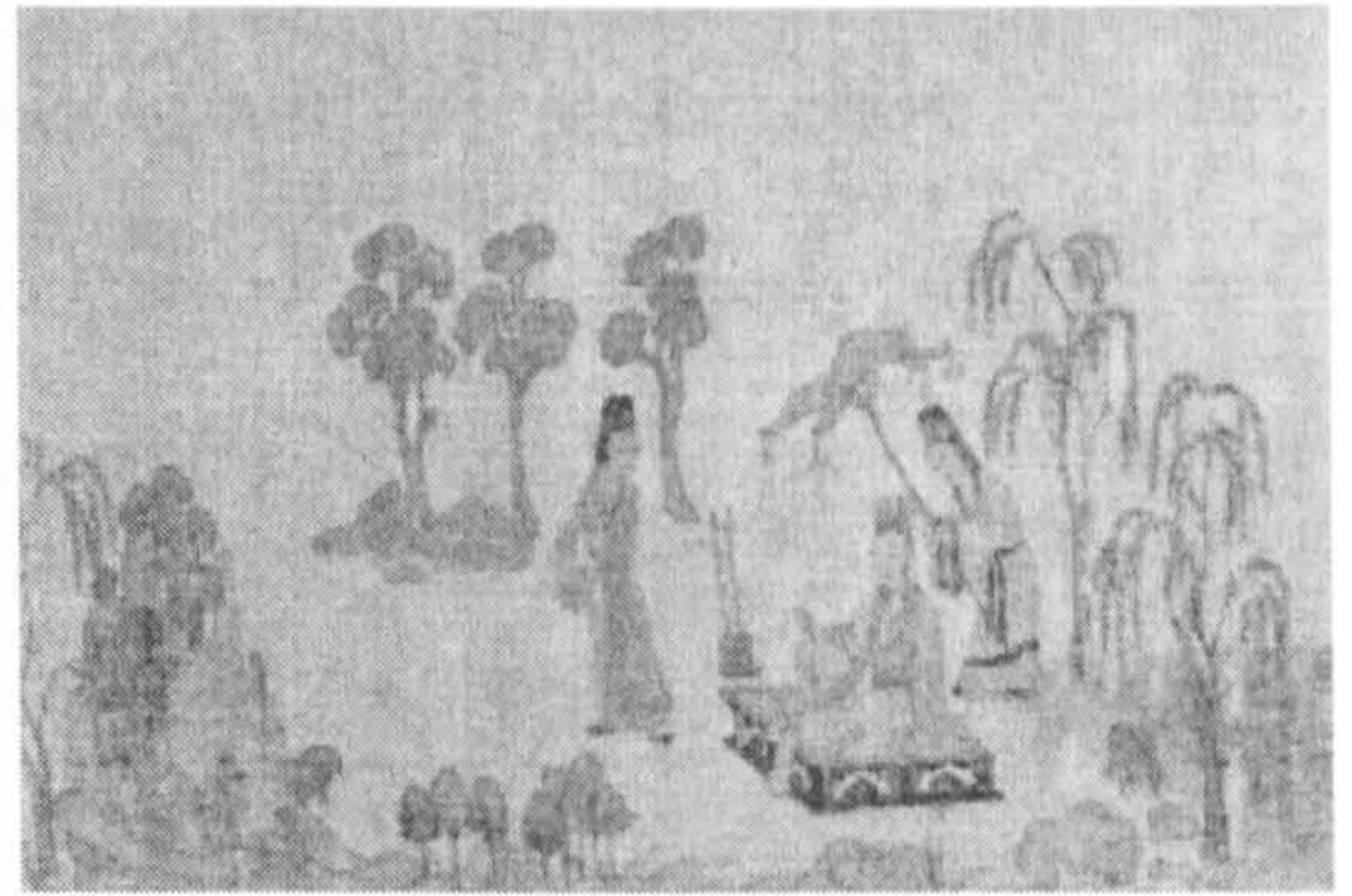
Chinese viewers enjoy wandering in the space contained in the painted landscape. Therefore these painters visualised mountains, rocks, tiny pagodas or scholars chanting or meditating within a teahouse on the hill or sitting in small boats within a representation of water flowing quietly into the vastness of the Tao perceived within their own mental capacity. This movement through space can be compositionally stationary or travelling at different levels of understanding. The



2. Fan Kuan, *Sitting along by a stream*.
Hanging scroll, ink and light colour
on silk, 156.1x106.3cm,
The National Palace Museum, Taipei

dimension of these spaces is infinite and extends towards to the farthest horizon/emptiness. An ancient Chinese landscape painting usually contains a structure of continuing space but with a unified foreground just as the Chinese gardener introduces borrowed background scenery in to his formal garden. We can see this in the paintings of Fan Kuan 范寬 (990-1030) from the date around the first half of the eleventh century. When we look at “Sitting along by a stream”, the artist

created a huge contrast between the small character playing a musical instrument in the foreground and the vastness of the misty mountain scenery in the background to express the great spatial differences in the landscape painting.



3. Left: *Admonitions of the Court Instructress*, China, Tang dynasty, 6th-8th century AD, (Height:25 cm), British Museum Collection

4. Right: *On the Goddess of the Luo River*, colour on silk (572cm x 27.1cm), Palace Museum Collection, China

These paintings also show evidence of identification as part of the universe. During the natural evolution of Chinese painting in the Six Dynasties (AD 220-589), the main characteristic of Chinese painting was to turn attention from the human figure as seen for example in Gu Kaizhi's 顧愷之 (AD 348-409) paintings, "Admonitions of the Court Instructress to the Court Ladies"⁶⁷ and "On the Goddess of the Luo River", Eastern Jin Dynasty AD 317-420 toward a more "mountain and water" type of painting as seen in "The Emperor Ming-Huang's Journey to Shu". The portrayal of men and animals became a minor role in Chinese painting. "Mountains and Waters" (Shansui– Sansui in Japanese) became the essence of "Landscape" and a major type of artwork for the artist to convey their expression of nature. As Confucius (551-479 B.C.) stated "*The wise find pleasure in water, the virtuous find pleasure in the mountain.*"⁶⁸ He suggested man should be wise and virtuous, part of nature, providing nurture for all living creatures. A landscape garden can be seen not only to reflect man's fondness for nature but also, with its arrangement of stone and water, to symbolise man's essential wisdom and virtue.

The Chinese seem always to find a way to live in harmony with nature and

⁶⁷ <http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/compass/ixbin/goto?id=OBJ2100> 24/11/2003

⁶⁸ P. 158, *Art of Chinese Gardening*, 樓慶西、藝術家出版社, Taipei, 2001

demonstrate a feeling for the beauty of the cosmos. This to them is more attractive than the world of man. An early song tells how the beauties of nature are as significant as, and equal to, those of the world of man.

*“Gorgeous in their beauty
Are the flowers of the cherry.
Are they not magnificent in their dignity –
The carriages of the royal bride?”*⁶⁹

When we open up a roll of Chinese landscape painting, we can discover the mountain peak hiding behind the clouds, hills, rocks, bridges connecting two sides of land, forest, pagoda, running water, and a pond etc. The three-dimension representation on paper evokes the mystery of the atmosphere and the scene represented. The multifarious brushstrokes which Chinese artists use have been developed over the centuries and have been refined to represent the mountains and hills full of life. The Chinese garden is designed as an artistic format and is involved with painting, sculpture, and poetry. *“The garden is an artistic recreation of nature; a landscape painting in three dimensions.”*⁷⁰ A three-dimensional design representing the Chinese landscape painting employs many natural elements such as trees, rock, water and flowers and architectural types of buildings such as the pagoda, and tea house. What the Chinese garden is trying to do is to search out the balance and harmony between man and nature utilising Taoism’s principles. Both of them are guided by very similar aesthetic considerations, which involve a space, a place, a time

⁶⁹ P. 46, *The World of Japanese Garden*, Loraine Kuck, John Weatherhill Inc. New York and Tokyo. 1984

⁷⁰ http://www.imperialtours.net/suzhou_garden-frame.htm, 7/10/2001

and movement but in a different dimension. As Karin Albert stated “*a Chinese garden is a carefully composed microcosm mirroring the macrocosm.*”⁷¹

If we look at a painting such as “Sketches from a Travel Album”⁷² by Ch’ien Ku 錢穀 (1508-1578) which dates from the sixteenth century and compare it with a garden such as the garden of Zhuo Zheng 拙政園 dated 1509 we can see the similarities and understand that Chinese landscape painting (Shansui Huah) and Chinese garden design have a very meaningful relationship with each other. In both there is a sense of the artist/designer merging with nature, this is evident in the forms of the painting or garden, but we can surmise that this happens also in the process of creating the work.

The *Yi Jing* of Chinese Garden Design

As discussed earlier the creation of *yi jing* was the highest standard for the ancient Chinese artist to achieve in their creations whether in painting, poetry, music, garden design or bonsai. The Chinese artist not only rationally described the formal appearance of nature but through the scene also expressed a thought, an understanding of the force in nature and an emotional response. We may call this an “emotional phenomena” which has allowed the viewer to empathize with and enter into the dynamics of natural phenomena. The Chinese artist attempted to create an artwork in which the spiritual/poetic resemblance is more in evidence than the physical resemblance. This idea would apply to Chinese garden design too.

“*First comes the conception, then the design and then the construction.*”⁷³ The

⁷¹ <http://www.venuscomm.com/rocks.html> 29/10/2001

⁷² Ming Dynasty, Album leaf, ink and colour on paper, 28.5x39.1cm

⁷³ P. 2, On Chinese Garden, Cong-Zhou Chen, Tongji University Press, Shanghai, China, 1985

garden designer employed natural and artificial elements such as streams, woods, rocks or architecture to create an aesthetic *yi jing* which would bring the audience into the gardener's emotional creation and spiritual concept of nature. It also created a freedom to allow the audience to walk through the garden, to move around and feel the phenomena of nature within a poetic environment.

A garden designer would create his works in a similar way to the painter. Both would travel hundreds of miles to observe creatures and natural forms, to look for example into a spectacular mountain landscape and to draw sketches from life. The gardener would work from a concept in order to construct the garden to symbolize the natural forces and to create a garden with an *yi jing*. We might say of his garden "*though man-made, this should appear to be formed by nature.*"⁷⁴ His garden would not only be a materialized environment but also a space providing surroundings for spiritual contemplation.

The Spatial Engagement within the Artistic Garden

The Chinese garden is as big as the relationship between the garden and the cosmos and also smaller than the relationship between a person and the garden. It is a question of scale and an individual's perception of reality.

In a garden a bamboo grove, plum blossom and lotus work in the same way as the scenery and images of a beautiful free-style Chinese landscape or flower and bird painting. The Garden, constructed from such components is built for man's leisure and within a limited area and will create a poetic *yi jing* which effects spatial awareness. A good garden design should contain the cosmos: "*the garden is*

⁷⁴ P. 2, On Chinese Garden, Cong-Zhou Chen, Tongji University Press, Shanghai, China, 1985

*therefore outside the garden, and the scenery is therefore outside the scenery”*⁷⁵ and the visitor to the garden will experience the space without sensing any spatial limitation.

From a Western viewpoint, the universe is an expanse of empty space which contains objects. For the Chinese artist/garden designer however, space and the objects in space might be described as being part of each other. As a Chinese painter regards empty space in his painting as an integral part of the composition, so too the Chinese gardener emphasizes the integrated nature of emptiness. The materialized element is therefore inside the emptiness and the emptiness is therefore inside the material. The objective materials such as artificial mountains, ponds, and architecture merge with spatial emptiness to work harmoniously with each other in an holistic way.

As expressed previously the garden designer uses the limited space of the garden to represent an infinite cosmos. To achieve this he might break up the space in a garden into a few different small spaces, for example around rocks, sand, water and plants. These divisions create spaces within the garden which can be appreciated as individual areas or components in themselves as well as being an integral part of the garden in its entirety. In this way we may describe that there is a garden within the garden, there is the implication and understanding of the part within the whole and the whole might be infinite in space. As such the principles of the unity of Man and Heaven can be seen to be applied to garden practice. Moreover, external scenery is borrowed from outside the garden and organised to make a connection with the internal images. The infinite exterior and limited interior have been brought together

⁷⁵ P. 11, On Chinese Garden, Tongji University Press, Shanghai, China

to become one: a private space to create a beautiful *yi jing* providing rich and complex phenomena which can remind people about essential aspects of life and nature. The landscape garden thus provides the visitor with the feeling of being connected to Heaven and Earth.

It is also possible when considering these issues of “transformative” space to make a connection to contemporary installation practice. The site-specific nature of much contemporary installation and environmental art practice and the potential of such interventions in space to trigger responses in the visitor is akin to the creation of *yi jing* which occurs in the limited spaces of traditional Chinese gardens.

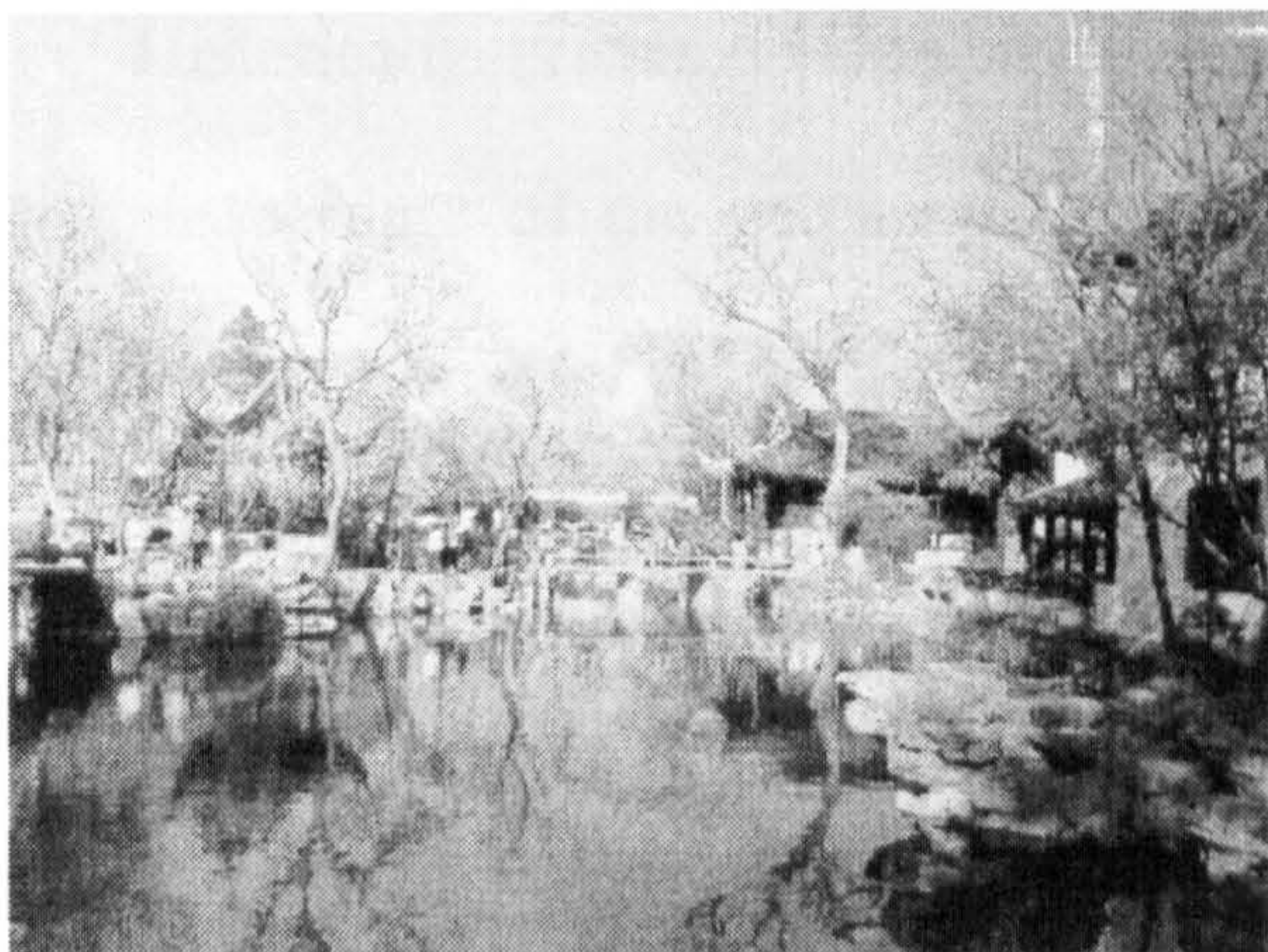
As I mentioned, the Chinese garden was normally constructed by a few elements which played different roles. The garden functioned as a cultural as well as a social place for the owner and guest. Zhang Chao-Zhi’s (張潮之) poem describes this:

*“ Listen to the birds singing in the spring,
Listen to the cicada singing in the summer,
Listen to the insects singing in the autumn
Listen to the snow dropping in the winter,
Listen to the sound of moving chess during the daytime,
Listen to the sound of bamboo flute during the
evening, ”*⁷⁶

What a clear mind picture is summoned up by this poem! When the seasons change garden scenery becomes different. A garden turns into a stage where the

⁷⁶ P. 49, 中國庭院與文人思想, 黃長美, 明文書局, Taipei, 1988

viewer is able to appreciate all of Nature's changes. The viewer would be able to participate in the space and experience the environment.



6. Zhuo Zheng garden, Su Zhou, 1506-21

A good garden design can bring man into a secluded paradise, and the outside world would be far away from the internal space. For example, Su Zhou, Zhuo Zheng garden (蘇州拙政園), has structures built into

different areas of the garden. Buildings such as a hall, pavilion and court divide the whole space into different scenes. The bridges, paths and rocks going between those buildings create a movement inside the interior space. The artificial buildings divide the whole space into a complex environment but it still remains as one garden. Pond, lotus, plants and loquat trees, and other natural elements have been arranged into a particular sequence to embellish the garden which becomes more attractive and interesting. One can imagine on a deep and quiet evening, sitting in the pavilion near by the mirror like pond, watching the reflection of a starry moon and garden. The breeze gently touches the surface of the water and the moon has been borrowed from the outside world and moved into the garden. Such a place fully provides the privacy, serenity and high sensation of genuine *yi jing*.



7. Pond and path, Zhuo Zheng garden, Su Zhou

The Chinese Temple Garden

Historically, priests would choose famous mountains or scenic spots to build a temple because of the necessity for training those people who required a quiet environment in order to meditate. During the period of the Tang and Song Dynasties (618-1279), temple buildings developed into a unified style and became not only a place of religion but also local community centres. For example, the “Five mountains and Ten temples”⁷⁷ were famous *Ch’an* Buddhism temples as well as public spaces where people might meet or admire the environment. Designers of temple gardens such as these employed the aesthetic concept of landscape in temple garden design. The early records of temple gardens refer back to the Eastern Tsin Dynasty (317-420). For example The “Biography of great Priests” contains early evidence of a temple garden built by the priest Hui-Yuan (慧遠). He built a small *Ch’an* garden surrounded by scenery in Toung-Lin Temple at Mt. Lu, in the Eastern Tsin Dynasty (317-420).⁷⁸

The function of the temple gardens differs from that of the private and imperial gardens. The temple garden is a centre of religion as well as the focus of the landscape garden. The temple garden became popular in garden design because of people’s belief in and support for Buddhism, especially that of emperors in various dynasties. Garden owners became fascinated by the aesthetic effect of temple buildings in the garden. The buildings were often a beautiful colour and easily noticed in the mass of green, animating the garden and having an ingenious effect

⁷⁷ 江南禪寺爲五山十刹（餘杭徑山、杭州靈隱、淨慈、寧波天童、育王等寺爲禪院五山。杭州中天竺、湖州道場、溫州江心、金華雙林、寧波雪竇、台州國清、福州雪峰、建康鰲谷、蘇州萬壽、虎丘等寺爲禪院十刹，中國佛教儀軌制度，<http://book.bfn.org/books2/1105.htm#a01>，22/10/2001

⁷⁸ 佛教建築漫談，白化文，<http://fy.fjnet.com/art/bbhw.htm> 03/01/2002

like “painted dragons brought to life”.

Ch'an philosophy is full of passion for, and affinity, with nature. For one who is practicing *Ch'an*, Nature is a force that can be trusted for a lifetime to give one full support and to allow one to obtain inspiration. *Ch'an* masters were always inspired by this wisdom and gained enlightenment from natural influences and sources.

In the past, *Ch'an* masters commonly visited great masters travelling around to different temples in order to seek enlightenment through self-understanding. They gained experience in understanding their immediate environment in this way. The message of understanding has been transformed by many masters and scholars who have experienced this message in their own lifetime, in their environment, and have employed this philosophy of self-understanding in garden design. These *Ch'an* concepts are applied to garden design to represent the teaching of essential wisdom. Thus the garden can provide a pleasurable and peaceful environment for visitors to experience the *yi jing* of the microcosm.

The Japanese *Ch'an* Garden

“I am nothing but blocks of stone on pieces of gravel. I am nothing but weight and silence, inertia and density. Nothing will ever learn my secret, or even whether I contain one. The only thing that can penetrate me is the strident cry of the cicada that pierces the heart of summer. Be content to say a word and ask me nothing; be silent and try, through my hermetic body, to find yourself.”

The importance of the Japanese *Ch'an* gardens is that they still exist and therefore have the potential to exert an influence on contemporary culture, and specifically have influenced Western artists of the twentieth/twenty-first centuries. By comparison Chinese *Ch'an* gardens no longer retain their purity of *Ch'an* form as over time they have merged with other types of gardens, it can be argued also that the Chinese have paid more attention to the literati garden (a scholar's garden). The Japanese *Ch'an* garden (dry landscape garden) is important to this thesis and its consideration of the links between *Ch'an* and *yi jing* and contemporary installation practice. With the accessibility of Japan in the modern period many Western artists have visited these gardens and have been inspired and influenced, producing remarkable creative results in response to them. These *Ch'an* gardens and the concepts of *Ch'an* have changed these artists' view as to how to deal with different concerns in their own creations and have led them to develop their own art into new areas. The engagement with time and space in these gardens can be said to have influenced certain concepts of Western artistic development.

Buddhism came from China to Japan in A.D.552. Japan had not produced any religious artists of note before this time. Japan is famous for paintings, carving, ceramics, gardening, architecture, literature and sculpture: all of these arts have therefore been deeply indebted to Chinese Buddhist and Confucian philosophy. *Ch'an* Buddhism ("Zen" Buddhism in Japanese) had reached Japan in 1191 (Heian/Kamakura period 1185-1333) and influenced the whole of Japanese culture as well as the specific areas mentioned above. Japanese *Ch'an* monks introduced two sects

⁷⁹ P. 42, Reading Zen in the Rocks, François Berthier/Graham Parkes, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago, 2000

of *Ch'an* Buddhism, Lin-Chi (Rinzai in Japanese) in 1191 and Ts'ao-Tung (Soto in Japanese) in 1227.⁸⁰ From this time, up until the Ashikaga (Muromachi) period (1336-1573), the spiritual influence of *Ch'an* Buddhism grew and had a profound influence on Japanese art and culture. The *Ch'an* priests were greatly revered and gradually became the most influential characters in the court and government. Japanese *Ch'an* art styles matured through this time and merged with Japanese taste.

Historical and geographical links between Japan and China can be said to have created some spiritual affinities between their national characters. As a result the Japanese easily absorbed and assimilated Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism and *Ch'an* Buddhism from China. Political administration systems as well as the art and the literature of the Chinese were also borrowed, but in the process of borrowing, the Japanese always converted and adapted their appropriations to produce a new and truly Japanese culture from imported elements.

These links and connections between China and Japan can be seen in aspects of religion and Japanese gardens which had their origins in China but were adapted by the Japanese. Japan was aware of the sophisticated civilisation that existed in China, for example, the city of Kyoto and Nara are similar to the Chinese capital city Ch'angan. T'ang poetry and literature also influenced Japanese spiritual culture, further evidence of the very strong tie between China and Japan in the past. The very same Chinese, Korean and Japanese priests, political administrators and scribes who imported the knowledge of Chinese philosophy and cultures, brought also the principles and technical skills of garden design to the Japanese Imperial court

⁸⁰ The Lin-Chi sect, introduced to Japan from China by the priest Ensai, emphasizes sudden shock and meditation on the paradoxical statements called "Koan". The Ts'ao-Tung transmitted to Japan by Dogan on his return from China, prefers the method of sitting meditation ZaCh'an. — The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, The University of Chicago, Volume 12, 1992

around A.D.552. Later, when *Ch'an* had been introduced into Japan in the twelfth century, it inspired garden design but in a more simple and symbolic form. The simplicity of the Chinese landscape ink painting (Sumi in Japanese) was often represented in gardens by the gardens containing only a few plants or an empty space without plants, rocks and sand. The rock arrangements have come to play a dramatic role in Japanese garden design becoming a very philosophical, and uniquely Japanese concept. Dry-mountain-water landscape gardens (Karesansui) are the most common attraction for us to look at and discover the abstraction of a natural scene - just a few plants, white sand or gravel (Ocean), water (empty space) and rocks (Islands or Hills)....

Ultimately, as historical developments continued, they developed into the five types of garden that we can see in Japan nowadays:

Hill and pond - gardens in which nature is represented by artificial hills and ponds which remind us of mountains and ocean.

Tea gardens - Roji, a teahouse, which may be located within a large garden. A garden style which included a teahouse for the tea ceremony, stone paths, lanterns and water basins. Green plants are skilfully placed around the teahouse and pond and the garden gives the visitor pleasure in enjoying the tea and the beauty of the surroundings.

Stroll gardens - fully developed from the Chinese Imperial garden style, these were built upon acres of land by the Japanese imperial family near the mountains. This type of garden employed ponds, islands or hills, stone paths, buildings such as a tea house or residence set in beautiful natural scenery and placed in appropriate

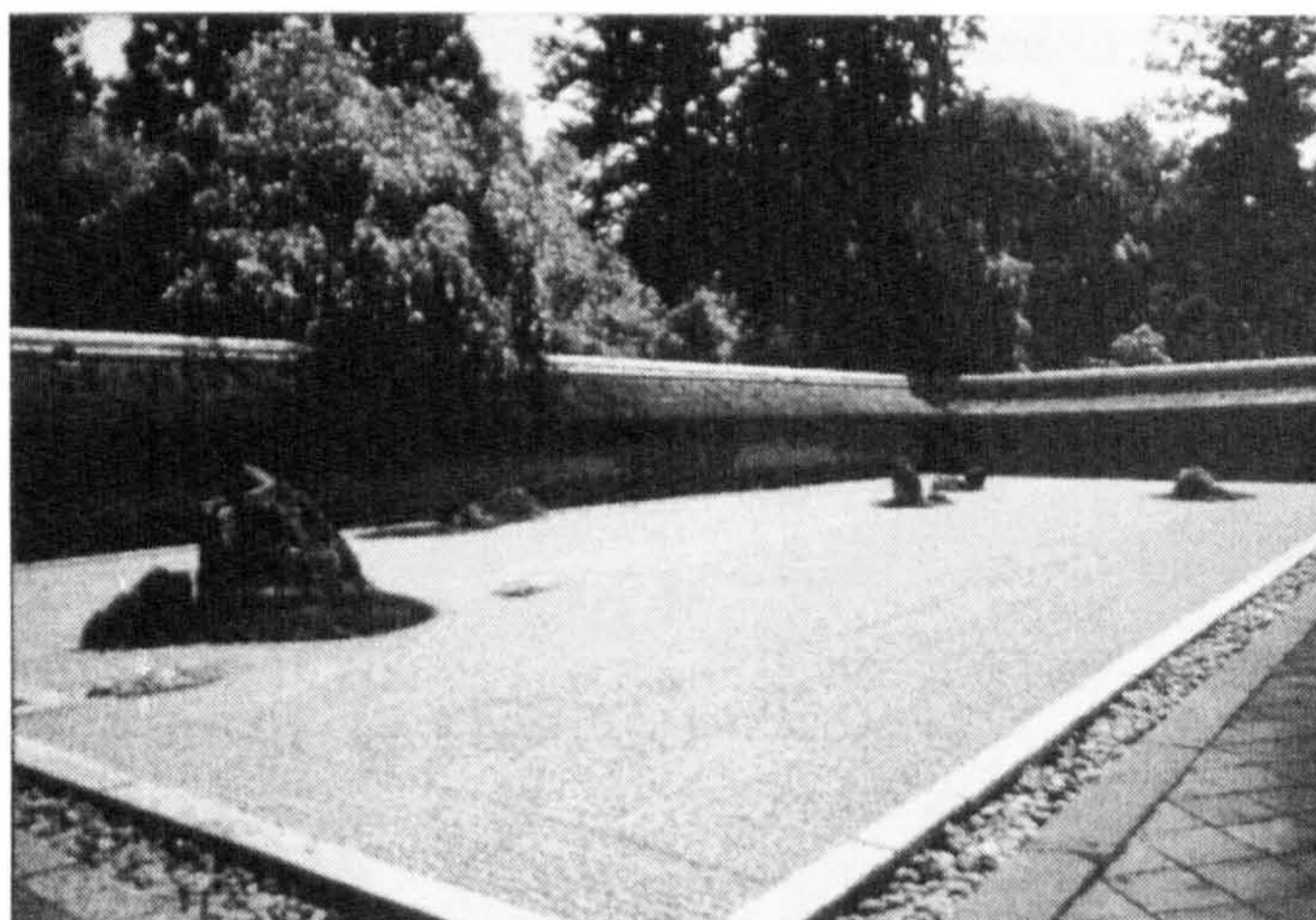
surroundings. We are unable to see the whole garden from one point, and it is always necessary to walk around and experience the garden. As such they share qualities similar to both Chinese landscape gardens and landscape painting.

Courtyard gardens - these are commonly found in Japanese residential areas in which space is limited and are inspired by the dry landscape and teahouse garden.

Dry landscape gardens - often called the *Ch'an* garden or Karesansui garden. This type of garden is a most popular garden which employs deep *Ch'an* traditions and can be termed “the garden of emptiness”.

The Art of the Fifteen Rocks Garden

These *Ch'an* gardens tradition in which *Ch'an* gardens are meant to be a tool for “self-examination, spiritual refinement, and ultimate enlightenment”⁸¹ was borrowed from China in

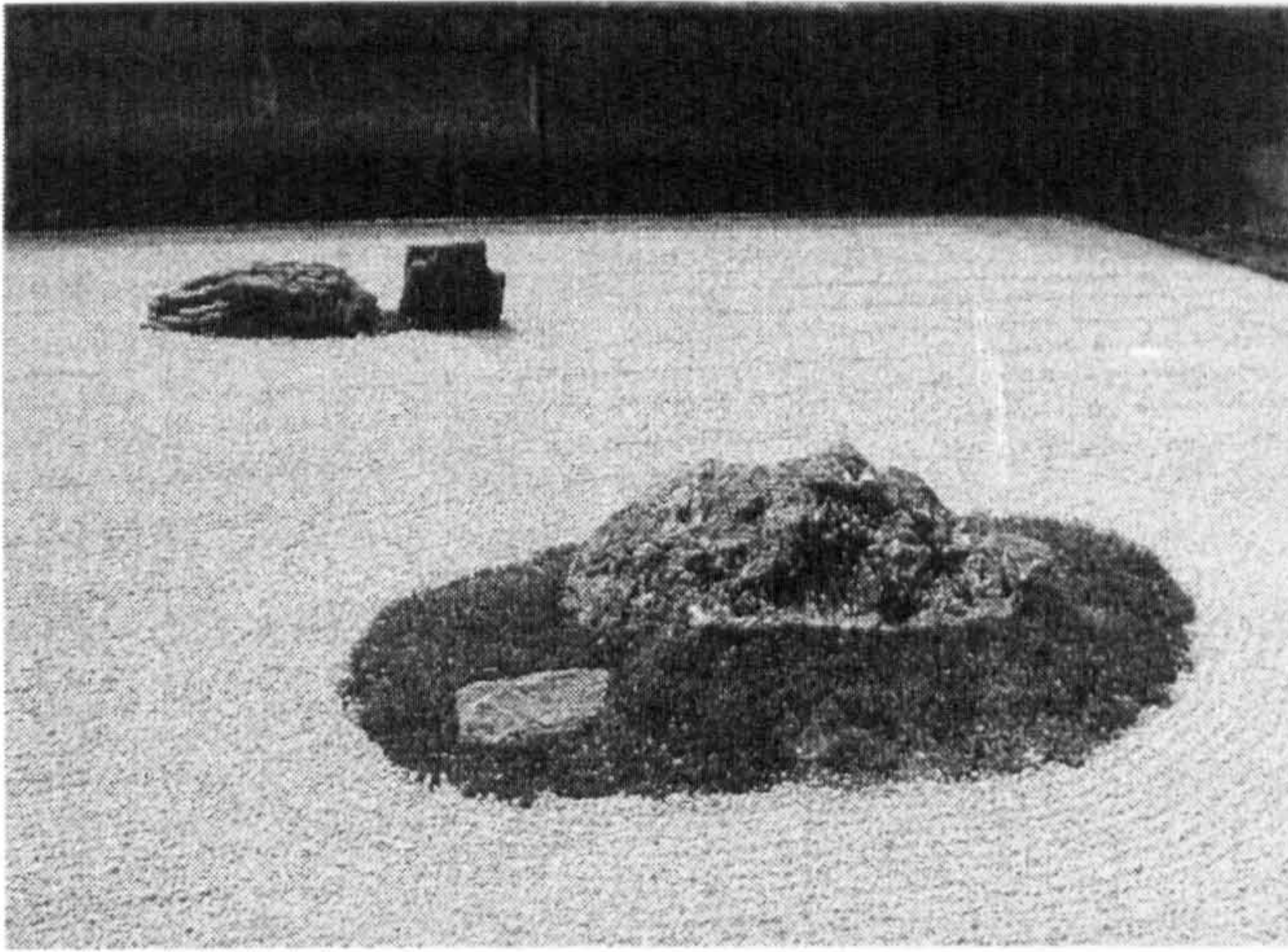


the Sung dynasty but there 8. Dry landscape garden, Ryoanji, Kyoto, 1488-1499

are very few examples of this type of garden left in China today. However, typical *Ch'an* philosophical gardens were constructed in different locations within the ancient capital city of Kyoto, and several remain to this day. Arguably the most famous is the dry landscape garden of Ryoanji temple in Kyoto described by Bean

⁸¹ P. 74, *The Garden Art of Japan*, Masao Hayakawa, translated by Richard L. Gage, Weatherhill/Heibonsha, New York, Tokyo, 1977

Porter, an American physician and artist as “*a beautiful poem, a simple statuary, a deep philosophy, a wonderful picture, a magnificent architecture, a lovely music, and a profound religion.*”⁸²

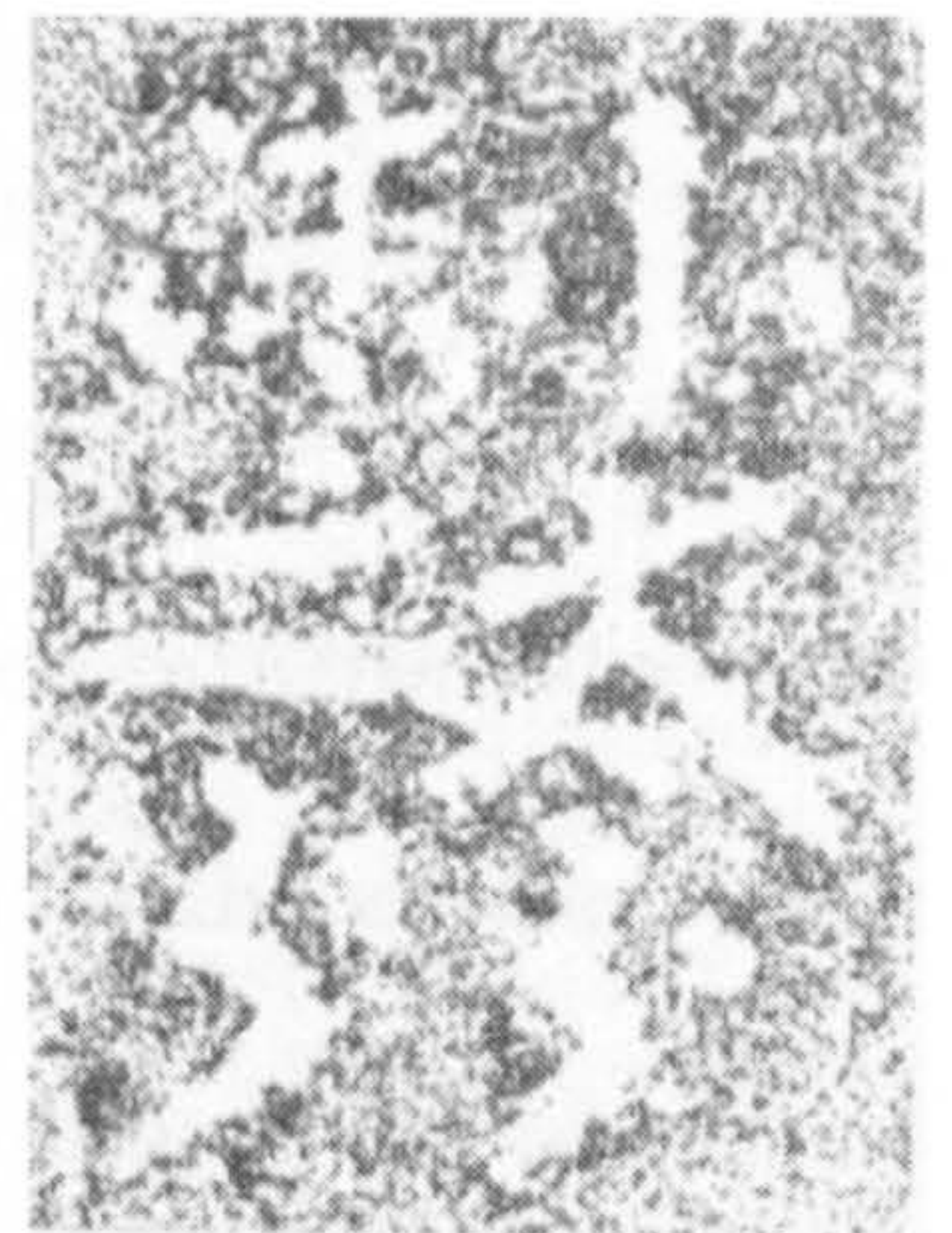


9. The detail, Dry landscape garden, Ryōanji

It is not known exactly when or by whom this garden was designed or built. The date of 1488 is suggested by the fact that the temple was destroyed by a fire during the Onin Civil Wars (1447-77) and it is therefore possible that its garden may have

been laid out during the temple reconstruction which we know happened in 1488.⁸³

There seem no correct records to indicate who first made or constructed this important creation. Was it a craftsman ~ (considered to be from the lower orders) or was it a highly esteemed *Ch'an* garden designer who made this garden in ancient Japan? It has been suggested by various writers of the Tokugawa period (around 1588) and a certain scholar Kurokawa (around 1680)⁸⁴ that the garden designer who designed this rock garden may have been one of the following: a landscape painter named Soami (1480?-1525), a talented



10. The back of one of the 15 stones is inscribed the names of Kotaro and Hikojiro.

⁸² P. 30, *Reading Zen in the Rocks*, François Berthier/ Graham Parkes, The University of Chicago, Chicago and London, 2000

⁸³ <http://www.columbia.edu/itc/ealac/V3613/ryoanji/ryoanji.htm> 11/06/2004
<http://www.yamasa.org/japan/english/destinations/kyoto/ryoanji.html> 11/06/2004

P. 47-58, *Reading Zen in the Rocks*, François Berthier/ Graham Parkes, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago, 2000

⁸⁴ P. 398, *The World of Japanese Garden*, fourth printing, 1984

monk, Tessen Soki, at Ryoan ji, or a tea master Kanamori Sowa (Seventeenth century) and we know also that on the back of one of the 15 stones is inscribed the names of Kotaro and Hikojiro. It is suggested by contemporary research in the text of “Kyo no Niwa, Kyoto Meien no Kai”, 1959⁸⁵ that the latter two were possibly two labourers (kawaramono in Japanese) who are thought to have carried out the construction.

We simply cannot say that the creators of this garden designed it in order to seek personal enlightenment or truth, but the garden is evidence of their spiritual and artistic ability: they have created a great meditative mental picture plane illustrating their understanding of *Ch'an*. These gardens, although they have been reduced to a form consisting of nothing but rocks and gravel, are presented in such a skilful way that the viewer never gets tired of looking at them. Ryoanji has inspired wonder and continues to draw attention to the contemplative philosophy of *Ch'an*.

The garden is constructed in front of the abbot's quarters of the temple and is bounded on two sides by low earthen parapet walls which time, history and weather have constantly changed, so that the clay (treated with boiled oil) from the ridge which tops the wall has constantly dissolved and settled into the earthen walls naturally, to create a natural, landscape type of spontaneous form. These lengths of wall around the south and west side achieve a sense of balance and perfect form. Behind the walls, there is a 'borrowed' landscape consisting of a forest of pine, cedar, and cherry trees which both invite the visitor and cut the garden off from the busy surroundings outside. The other two sides of the garden provide a resting area for viewers allowing them to merge themselves into the “temptation of emptiness”.

⁸⁵ P. 170, *The World of Japanese Garden*, fourth printing, 1984

One may notice that there is a thin layer of mossy ground cover surrounding the rocks. This becomes an important element in such a minimal environment. In the summer, the green moss forms a relationship with the colour of the trees in the world outside the garden. From my own experience of visiting the garden I would state that the colour is dull green and provides a good contrast with the character of the rocks whilst echoing the trees beyond. It illustrates the function of life very quietly: as a living organic form it responds to the seasons and the weather. Without this green life form the whole place would be more lifeless or static, a serene but desolate place with only the sea of gravel monotonously appearing on the surface. The white gravel has been carefully raked into long lines to symbolize the ocean or rivers. Concentric circles raked into the gravel around the land (the moss covered base) suggest the ripples of water lapping the shores of rocky islands. The rocks are symbolic of the mystery of immortality in Taoist tradition.

The inner garden allows the visitor to, in a sense, remove themselves from the preoccupation of everyday life. Inner emptiness pervades the entire space, providing respite from the world outside. Like *Ch'an*, this is freedom from all attachments and is thus purifying to the mind.

There is not much difference between these meditative dry landscape gardens and the main garden which allows the viewer to walk around and experience movement, space and time. The spatial-imagination and metaphorical mountains all contain the same idea — to direct one into the emptiness. A Japanese scholar of garden design, Mirei Shigemori provides a significant discussion about the role of emptiness as an important feature in the beauty of the *Ch'an* garden in “Dry Landscape Gardens as an Art of Emptiness”:

“The art of emptiness, thus, began as a temporary art and its desire was to reach emptiness and become nothing. In the end, emptiness is emptiness, which works on nothing, and its central nature is to see movement in stillness. Even though emptiness is emptiness, a great operation takes place within the emptiness.

In an art of emptiness, a definition is given of the invisible, and therefore of that which does not appear, but it should be realized that the content is an expression which sees something in the invisible, which hears something in the inaudible... Therefore, being hidden is tentatively to feel emptiness. But in emptiness, as mentioned above, many operations are contained. And something very great resides there which attempts to return all to its essential nature.”⁸⁶

This *Ch'an* garden re-creates a *yi jing* of Nature and function as a place of retreat for the temple's monks, and other visitors, to meditate on the emptiness of the world around them. Many artists, from the distant past up to today, have appreciated this sophisticated and magnificent garden of emptiness and have followed the ancient practitioners' innovations with the intention of producing a mind-altered state of awareness.

From Chinese Garden Design towards Contemporary Installation

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter the Chinese garden functions as a

⁸⁶ Isamu Noguchi, Retrospective 1992, Koji Takahashi, Takeshi Mizutani, Chieko Tsuzuki, Asahi Shinbunsha Publisher, Tokyo, 1992

microcosm, a microscopic cosmos which is capable of containing a variety of elements, relationships, cultural experiences and aesthetic values. The garden is a place to invite the audience to participate in its spatial arrangement and to begin to understand the philosophic principles beyond the physical phenomena as perceived by the eye.

Most Chinese landscape gardens or Japanese *Ch'an* gardens are constructed with various natural elements. These materials contain the gesture of nature and are often found within the local environment. The garden designer employs them to create a poetic and theatrical three-dimensional piece of art, which presents the unity of subject and object within the meaning of the Universe. Can one describe an oriental garden as an earthwork, land art, an installation made from natural materials or an assemblage? The work of creating an Oriental garden involves personal consideration and manipulation of different spaces through interaction with materials and site. The audience are invited to walk through the garden and architectural space and complete the creation. Through this participation, the visitor can experience the open and ultimate *yi jing* created by the garden designer working from his own observation and personal experience.

The association with the notion of *yi jing* and the philosophy of *Ch'an* have been forgotten during the development of sculptural form in contemporary Chinese art, except through the dissemination of Japanese *Ch'an* masters and the concept of the *Ch'an* gardens which have become influential references in Western sculptural practice. *Ch'an* thinking and the spatial engagement of the *Ch'an* garden can be said to have challenged certain Western artist's philosophy and perception of space, and indeed to have inspired radical shifts in their thinking and understanding. As such it

has had considerable impact and can offer a new concept of sculptural practice. As for the differences between Modernist attitudes toward environmental installation and their present status, it is worth recalling that Modernists used installation to create their inventions and did this in the context of a modern life situation. These should perform similar functions as the Oriental garden in the past. A poetic and theatrical Oriental character of assemblage involves one being active with environmental manipulation, similar to the creation of the development of environmental installation practice. Moreover, this development creates an opportunity for this research not only to redefine traditional aesthetics, but it is also relevant in establishing a new benchmark of the poetic and theatrical character of *yi jing* in the spatial engagement of contemporary sculpture. Therefore, it would be interesting to look closely at the development of environmental installation and to explore the possibility of an interpretation between Oriental and Western practices.

Chapter 4

Through Western Eyes

This thesis seeks to explore the possibility of *yi jing* and *Ch'an* concepts providing a framework for the direction of a contemporary fine art practice. Implicit in this is a coming together of East and West. In my case, as an artist, it presents itself as a coming together of Eastern philosophy and aesthetic theory with a practice which has developed from Western traditions of making art. Cross-cultural fusions of this kind are not new: for the past two hundred years artists have talked about the possibility of Western and Eastern traditions meeting and there have been artists who have achieved remarkable results with their work reflecting the resonance brought about by such fusion. Artists from the modern period who can be said to exemplify this would include the Chinese painters Zao Wu- Ki (b.1921) and Tseng Yu-Ho (b.1925), Japanese artists such as Ryusaburo Umehara (1888-1986) and Leonard Tsuguharu Foujita (1886-1968) who work with oil painting and the renowned Korean-American artist Nam June Paik (b.1932) who has been at the forefront of new forms of fine art practice and use of video as an art form. The work of artists such as these, in which the coming together of Eastern and Western characteristics can be said to be a catalyst, has been influential and has encouraged other artists in their attempts to make their own contribution towards combining these two traditions.

Some of the key concepts which can be found in oriental art of the past, including garden design, have been identified earlier in this thesis: living in and with nature; an holistic view; articulation of space and the environment; the audience's involvement and participation, and a spiritual awareness. It will be argued that these

characteristics can be identified in the work of certain contemporary artists but are represented within different forms of artistic creation and within a different cultural context.

One interesting approach would be to look at the interpretation of the concepts of Oriental aesthetics from the standpoint of the development of Western art from the mid-nineteenth to the present contemporary practice. That historical research would provide a useful aesthetic background on how Eastern and Western art contacted each other in general. It would also be interesting to study the movement of the language of painting towards a perception of “theatrical” engagement. Following up with a focusing on the development of assemblage and environmental art around the 1960s and 1970s, and towards the installation practice in the contemporary situation, because this period shows so many relation values that can be analysed and interpreted.

To begin, it would be interesting to study some previous historical background of the integration between Eastern and Western artistic values. This should provide some influential reference points for further investigation into those Western artists’ creations and their background.

Early Developments

It can be seen from a general overview of the history of East-West cultural exchange that oriental concepts and tastes have exerted a gradual but significant influence on Western art.

The artistic interchange between East and West has been established for several

centuries. For example, around the second century B.C. the Chinese started trade along the Silk Road and the West became an influence in this business. Late in the 1600s, activities of the East India Companies⁸⁷ increased the trade of Oriental objects between West Europe and Asia. The arrival of Eastern decorative objects such as porcelain jugs and vases in the West led to their collection by Westerners: they became fashionable accessories to interior design. This was the case well into the nineteenth century.⁸⁸ However, at this point Western interest in the “Oriental” was an interest in the exotic, concerned with appearance, the decorative and with taste rather than with essential concepts. We can find relevant examples of Oriental influence in the Rococo period.

For example, Francois Boucher (1703-1770) used Oriental subject matter in the painting “*Chinese Fishing Party*” (1742), and Antoine Watteau’s (1684-1721) work also reflects the interest in the Orient: engravings after



11. Francois Boucher, *Chinese Fishing Party*, 1742

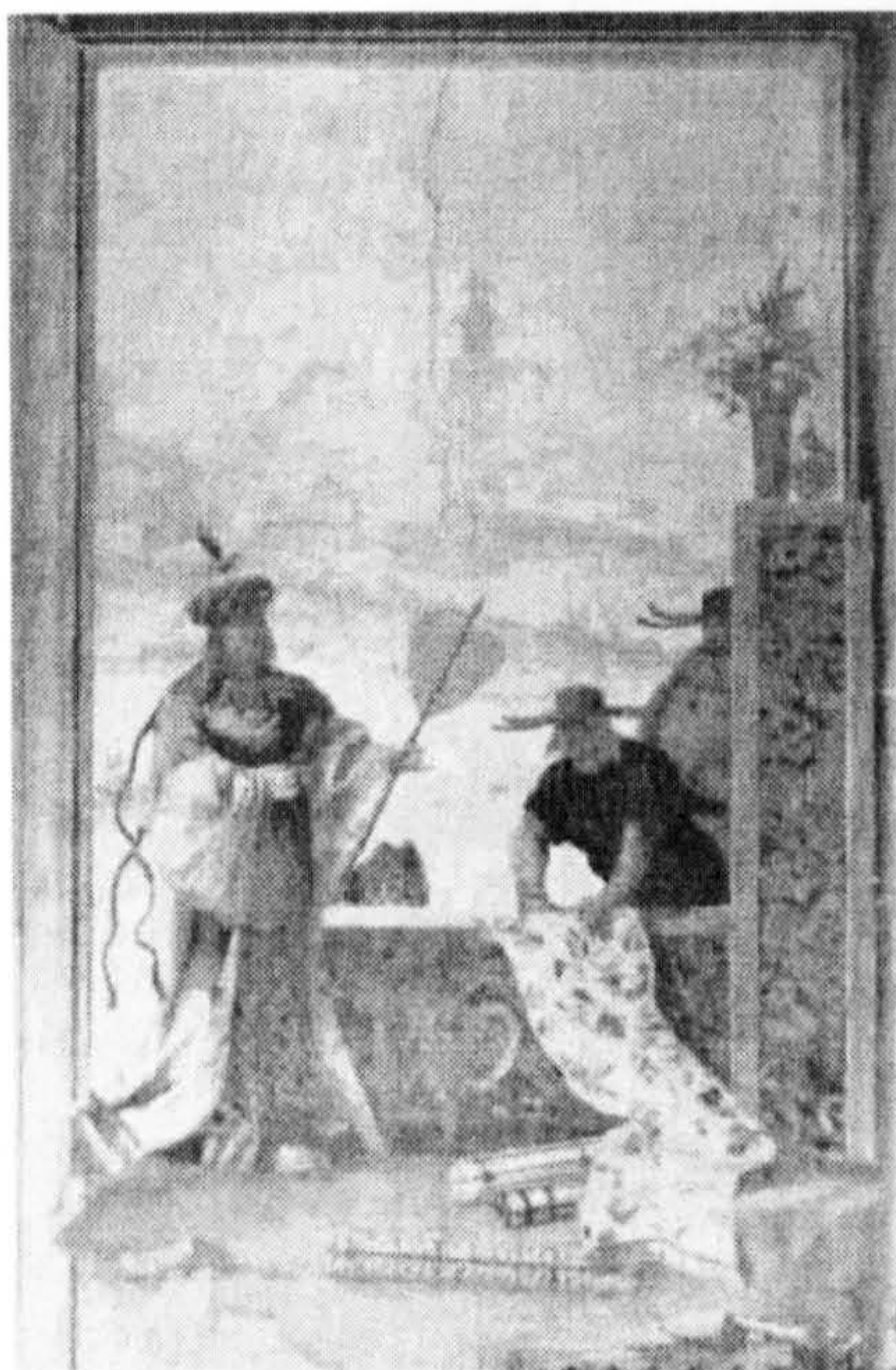
Watteau that are part of the British Museum collection show Chinese figures, e.g. “*Idol of the Goddess KI MAO SAO in the Realm of Mang in the Country of Laos*”. In the paintings of Giambattista Tiepolo (1696-1770) oriental influence can be found in paintings in the Foresteria di villa Valmarana such as “*Chinese Merchant with Material*” and “*Two Chinese with a Vase*”. In England there was the example of the Chinese pagoda built 1757-1762 by William Chambers (1723-1796) at Kew Gardens in London.

⁸⁷ British East India Company 1600-1874, Dutch East India Company 1602-1798

⁸⁸ P. 22, *Far Eastern Philosophical influences on Environmental art, 1967-1987*, Gail Enid Gelburd, The City University of New York, UMI, 1988



12. Antoine Watteau, *Idol of the Goddess KI MAO SAO in the Realm of Mang in the Country of Laos*, British Museum collection



13. Left: Giambattista Tiepolo, *Chinese Merchant with Material*. 14. Right: *Two Chinese with a Vase*, Foresteria di villa Valmarana

In the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the West became increasingly interested in the Oriental arts of painting, woodcut prints, architecture, temples and gardens. This was due to an increase in trade during this period. This was particularly the case after 1854, when Japan re-opened their business with the rest of the world in response to pressure from the U.S.A. Furthermore, in 1867 a Western audience was exposed to Japanese and Eastern art as a result of its inclusion in the

International Exposition in Paris, France. With this expansion in the amount of Oriental art visible and accessible in the West we might say that Orientalism had been “transplanted” across the Atlantic and the Pacific. It thus became an exotic field of interest to which Western artists began to find increasing access and which they began to study.

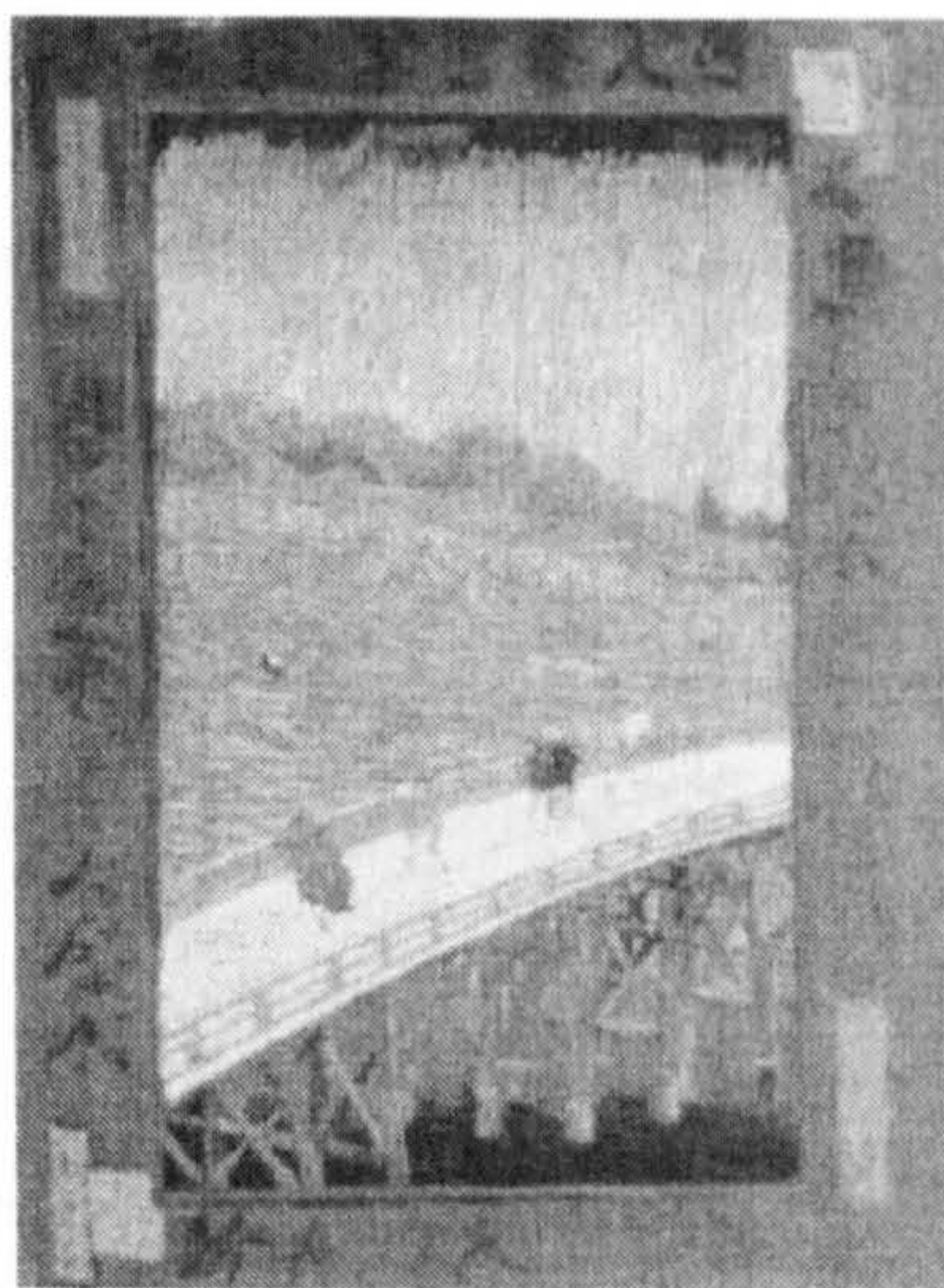


15. Monet, *Portrait de Madame*, 1875-1876

The emphasis within Oriental art upon the expression of the artist’s spiritual state in utilising natural and philosophical concepts, provided a fresh and inspirational viewpoint for the West. Evidence shows that during the second half of the nineteenth century artists such as Manet (1832-1883), Monet (1840-1926), Degas (1834-1917) and Toulouse Lautrec (1864-1901) were becoming increasingly interested in Eastern Art.⁸⁹ Toulouse Lautrec’s handling of line can be said to reflect

⁸⁹ P. 383, Japonisme, The Japanese influence on Western art since 1858, Wichmann Siegfried,

an Eastern, calligraphic influence. The appearance of kimonos and fans in painting by Monet, such as “*Portrait de Madame*” (1875-1876), reflect his admiration of Eastern art and culture. He was also a collector of Japanese prints which can be seen to this day at Giverny. During the 1870’s he created a large number of paintings about the seasons; this might indicate the influence of Eastern notions of subject



matter or simply a shared interest in nature. Vincent Van Gogh (1853-1890)

and his brother Theo had also been collecting

16. Left: Van Gogh, *Portrait of Pere Tanguy*, Oil on canvas, 92 x 75 cm, Musee Rodin, Paris.

17. Right: Van Gogh, *The Bridge in the Rain, (after Hiroshige)*, Oil on canvas 73.0 x 54.0 cm. Summer/autumn 1887 Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

hundreds of Hiroshige woodcut prints.⁹⁰ In March 1887 Van Gogh bought a number of prints from Siegfried Bing and organised an exhibition of Japanese prints at the Café du Tamborin. The colour and structure of these prints influenced Van Gogh heavily in his paintings, for example in “*Portrait of Pere Tanguy*” (1887-88) the background and the parasol are direct references to Japanese art. Again, in the case of “*Pear-tree in Blossom*”, the colour of the tree, garden and house retain the strong influence of the Japanese print. He also made a direct painted study of Hiroshige’s print “*The Bridge in the Rain, (after Hiroshige)*”, summer/autumn 1887.

Thames & Hudson, London, 1985

⁹⁰ P. 90, Van Gogh at the Van Gogh Museum, Ronald de Leeuw, Waanders Publishers, 11Ed., Zwolle, 1998

The Sophisticated Influence of *Ch'an* in the West

As described above the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw a growing interest, in the West, of the visual and decorative aspects of Eastern culture. By contrast in the twentieth century cross-cultural activities evidenced an increasing awareness and exploration of other aspects of Eastern culture through the study of Eastern philosophy. However, this wave of Oriental influence impacted not only on concepts of art but also upon religion and ways of thinking. Henry David Thoreau⁹¹ (1817-1862), a teacher, philosopher, and Naturalist, translated a French version of “*the Lotus Sutra*” (one of the Mahayana⁹² Sutras) to English and published it in America in 1844.⁹³ He came to realise what the Orientals meant by meditation/contemplation. In 1893, Soyen Shaku (1859-1919) a RinZai *Ch'an* master gave a speech (translated into English by D.T. Suzuki) about *Ch'an* Buddhism at the “World Parliament of Religions” conference in Chicago.⁹⁴ This was the first time an introduction to these spiritual teachings was given by the Asian *Ch'an* master to Westerners. One of his followers D.T. Suzuki “the first patriarch of American Zen/*Ch'an*”⁹⁵ was required by his master Shaku, as a missionary, to assist Paul Carus⁹⁶ (1852-1919) to translate the Tao Te Ching in 1897. During the period of assisting Carus, Suzuki also published his first book in English, the “*Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism*” in 1907.

⁹¹ <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/thoreau/> 10/11/2003

<http://www.transcendentalists.com/1thorea.html> 10/11/2003

⁹² Great Vehicle Buddhism, one sect of Buddhism, originally from India and then spread to Tibet, China, Japan, and Korea.

⁹³ A segment of the Lotus Sutra, edited by Henry David Thoreau and printed in Ralph Waldo Emerson's Transcendentalist/Unitarian journal, “The Dial” in 1844.

<http://www.orgsites.com/ca/buddhism/>, <http://awakening.to/timeline.html> 10/11/2003

⁹⁴ P. 52, Zen in the Fifties, Helen Westgeest, Waanders Publishers, Zwolle, 1996

⁹⁵ P. 21, Far Eastern Philosophical Influences on Environmental art, 1967-1987, Gail Enid Gelburd, the City University of New York, UMI, 1988

⁹⁶ The Editor of Open Court Publishing Company

Suzuki started to travel around America and Europe to continue to spread the *Ch'an* message and study Chinese manuscript copies of sutras. He translated Emanuel Swedenborg's (1688-1772) "Heaven and Hell" into Japanese for the Swedenborg Society in 1908. He published several English articles on *Ch'an* in 'The Eastern Buddhist' from 1921 and published a book "Essays in Zen Buddhism" in London in 1927. He highlighted a quantity of information about *Ch'an*, such as *Ch'an* wisdom and *Ch'an* in life and art whilst he was invited to teach *Ch'an* philosophy in England in 1936 and at Columbia University, New York from 1951 to 1957. He also helped to set up the Cambridge Buddhist Society in Massachusetts. Suzuki's activities helped to inspire the Western intellectuals such as John Cage (1912-1992), Carl Jung (1875-1961), Thomas Merton (1915-1968), Gary Snyder (b.1930), Allen Ginsberg (1926-1997), and Bernard Leach (1887-1979) etc.⁹⁷ and spread a very rich and realistic awareness of *Ch'an* in the West.

I would argue that the key concepts of *Ch'an* that Suzuki promoted began to exert an influence in the West because the doctrine is very straightforward and simple, and is capable of being accepted by Western thinkers. It can be practiced everywhere, at home or in the garden etc., it requires neither priest nor rite, prayer or ceremony and works with the basic concerns of any living being. As such it fits well within Western rationalism, but adds to it a further moral and spiritual dimension. I believe that this dimension of wisdom, or even something more, is not incompatible with criteria that had been evolving in the West since the Enlightenment. I would further argue that the conflicts which characterise much of the twentieth century (epitomised in the First and Second World Wars) have a parallel with the situation in China during the "Warring States" period described earlier. From the ashes of the

⁹⁷ <http://www.todaysquote.com/dtsuzuki/dtsuzuki.htm> 15/11/2003

sufferings of these two different warring periods I would identify a fertile ground for a philosophical reappraisal and a search for humanistic, holistic principles. Thus in the twentieth century there perhaps arose an opportunity for the West to approach Eastern culture and philosophy, to begin an acquaintance with and understanding of such philosophical concepts as those found in *Ch'an* and *Taoism*. In turn, for Western artists such exposure to these new ways of thinking and living could provide new possibilities for both form and content.

Oriental Influence in Western Painting

The impact of the Second World War affected the global political and economic situation of the 1940's and 50's. Of particular relevance to this thesis was the gaining of independence of Far Eastern and South Asian countries such as Taiwan, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore etc. which changed the political geography of the area. Relevant too was the emergence of the U.S.A. as a superpower during the reconstruction of the world economy after World War Two, and the division of Europe into two different political power blocs resulting in the Cold War. The Cold War had a global impact with two opposing political philosophies and systems centred around the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union. The American support for, and involvement in, Far Eastern countries such as Japan, Taiwan, Korea, and Vietnam can be said to have led to greater exposure, in America, to the East in all manner of ways: social, economic, political, cultural and philosophical.

What can be drawn from this general global political and economic background?

Firstly, the U.S.A. gradually established itself as an international economic and political superpower with the inevitable consequence that it was able to foster a

positive and energetic culture. As a result, for example, New York became a cultural centre of real significance - it can be argued that it took over as the Western cultural capital from Paris. During the turbulence of the 1939-44 war period, European artists including surrealists such as Andre Breton (1896-1966), Salvador Dali (1904-1989), Kurt Seligmann (1900-1962), Yves Tanguy (1900-1955) and others such as Fernand Leger (1881-1955), Piet Mondrian (1872-1944), Max Beckman (1884-1950) etc. immigrated to New York. The arrival of these artists brought pioneering concepts to American culture and we can see in the early development of the American abstract expressionists their interest in aspects of Cubism, Surrealism, and Abstraction.

Secondly, the involvement of the U.S.A. in supporting Eastern countries in their global strategy to resist communism inevitably led to further exposure to Eastern ideas, culture, sensibilities and tastes. Immigration from countries such as Korea gradually increased during these years. Global communication increased.

Thirdly, I would argue that there was a different kind of impact from the fall-out of the Second World War: a search for alternatives in response to the horrors and atrocities of that period, for other ways of considering ways of living, new possibilities to fulfil spiritual needs. These were drawn into sharper focus by the communist/capitalist divide. In the previous section, “The sophisticated influence of *Ch’an* in the West”, I described how Suzuki and others brought Eastern concepts to the West through teaching and publication. The increasing lines of communication between the West and parts of the East built upon this earlier line of influence and brought further knowledge of oriental concepts to the West thus providing inspiration for those searching for such alternatives.

Several of the American artists who emerged in the 1950's provide a useful point of discussion in relation to these issues. We can see in the work and careers of artists such as Mark Tobey (1890-1976), Morris Graves (1910-2001), Jackson Pollock (1912-1956), Franz Kline (1910-1962), and indeed in European artists such as Pierre Soulages (b.1919) and Hans Hartung (1904-1989), that they expanded their artistic creativity through their interest in, and attention to, oriental philosophy and art forms. They took their influence from metaphysical philosophies such as those of the Chinese, Japanese and Native American cultures and incorporated for example certain methods of Chinese art such as calligraphy to create abstract forms that attempted to express their inner life. Awareness and exploration of oriental Philosophy and *Ch'an*⁹⁸ helped lead them to their own diverse and radical interpretations.

As *Ch'an* philosophy is ontological and focuses upon human existence, it emphasises the use of the human mind to regulate, operate, and settle human life with the ultimate aim of achieving Enlightenment. Once the mind is controlled, our emotions will calm down and will be fully expressed in our daily life. The main spirit of *Ch'an* painting is directness, the emotional content is straight and forthright, and the brush strokes, with black ink on white rice paper, are simple. Each wash is spontaneous and modified, irreplaceable and not correctable. The direct link between the artist and the image is metaphysical, and this relates to the *Ch'an* representation of Nature.

Typical forms of Abstract Expressionism very directly express the artist's ideas and emotions and the action of painting is quick and powerful. These performances

⁹⁸ Chinese *Ch'an* and Japanese *Ch'an* have a very strong historical relationship. The philosophic principle is the same but the interpretation was relevantly different.

comply with the basic idea of *Ch'an*, straightforward but deeply philosophical. Simplicity is however not as simple as we imagine. It can represent refinement which arises through complexity; this paradox is characteristic of *Ch'an*, which describes the immaterial as the material, therefore falsity and reality are happening at the same time. In painting, the colour, line, and brushstroke can represent anything, we cannot define it, but through it we can simply feel the rhythm of the universe.

I would like to use the example of the American painter Mark Tobey to illustrate some of these ideas as he is one of only a few artists who emerged at this time who actually went to the East and studied Eastern art. Tobey was born in Wisconsin, USA, in 1890 and converted himself into the Bahai faith – the oneness of the universe/unity of diversity in 1918. In the 1920's he became curious about Asian art and philosophy. In 1923, Tobey study Chinese calligraphy with a Chinese artist, Teng Kuei, and first used Chinese brush techniques in order to study linear form. In 1934 he spent about three and half months concentrating on the study of painting and calligraphy in Shanghai, China and Japan, and also stayed for a month in a *Ch'an* monastery near Kyoto. Tobey himself later describes this experience: “...*I studied brushwork, acquainting myself with some of the Oriental masters, and found out for myself that one could experience a tree in a dynamic line as well as in mass and light.*”⁹⁹

Mark Tobey noted how the oriental influence on his work gave him a new version of the meaning of “abstract” leading him towards “*concentration and*

⁹⁹ Lipton, Rothko, Smith, Tobey XXXIX Venice Biennale, under the auspices of The Museum of Art, New York. 1958

consecration”¹⁰⁰ and the “*blending of simplicity, directness and profundity.*”¹⁰¹ The experience of studying painting, calligraphy and *Ch'an* in Japan (1934) inspired him to develop his famous “White Writing” - an overlaying of white or light-coloured calligraphic symbols on an abstract field which is itself composed of thousands of small and interwoven brush strokes. The harmonious Chinese philosophical trinity of Heaven, Earth and Man, are expressed metaphorically by Tobey by combining light (Heaven), with dark tone and colour (Earth) and the implication of Man through using systemic ordered structure. As Tobey later stated,

*“An artist today must find his expression closely linked to his individual experience or else follow in the old grooves resulting in lifeless forms. At a time when experimentation expresses itself in all forms of life, search becomes the only valid expression of the spirit.”*¹⁰²

Tobey can be seen to eliminate the noise and confusion of his surroundings and merge himself into the ‘wholeness’ of the Universe. He seems to allow the inner spirit take him into his paintings just as Eugen Herrigel wrote in “*Zen in the art of Archery*” that “*By letting go of yourself, leaving yourself and everything behind you so decisively that nothing more is left of you but a purposeless tension.*”¹⁰³ This concept of emptiness leads to an emotional expression of abstract creation “*which the ‘free’ play of ‘pure’ colour, form, and gesture enables artist and viewer to commune on an emotive or spiritual plane beyond the narrative and*

¹⁰⁰ One of *Ch'an* practice methods is to concentrate doing only one thing at a time.

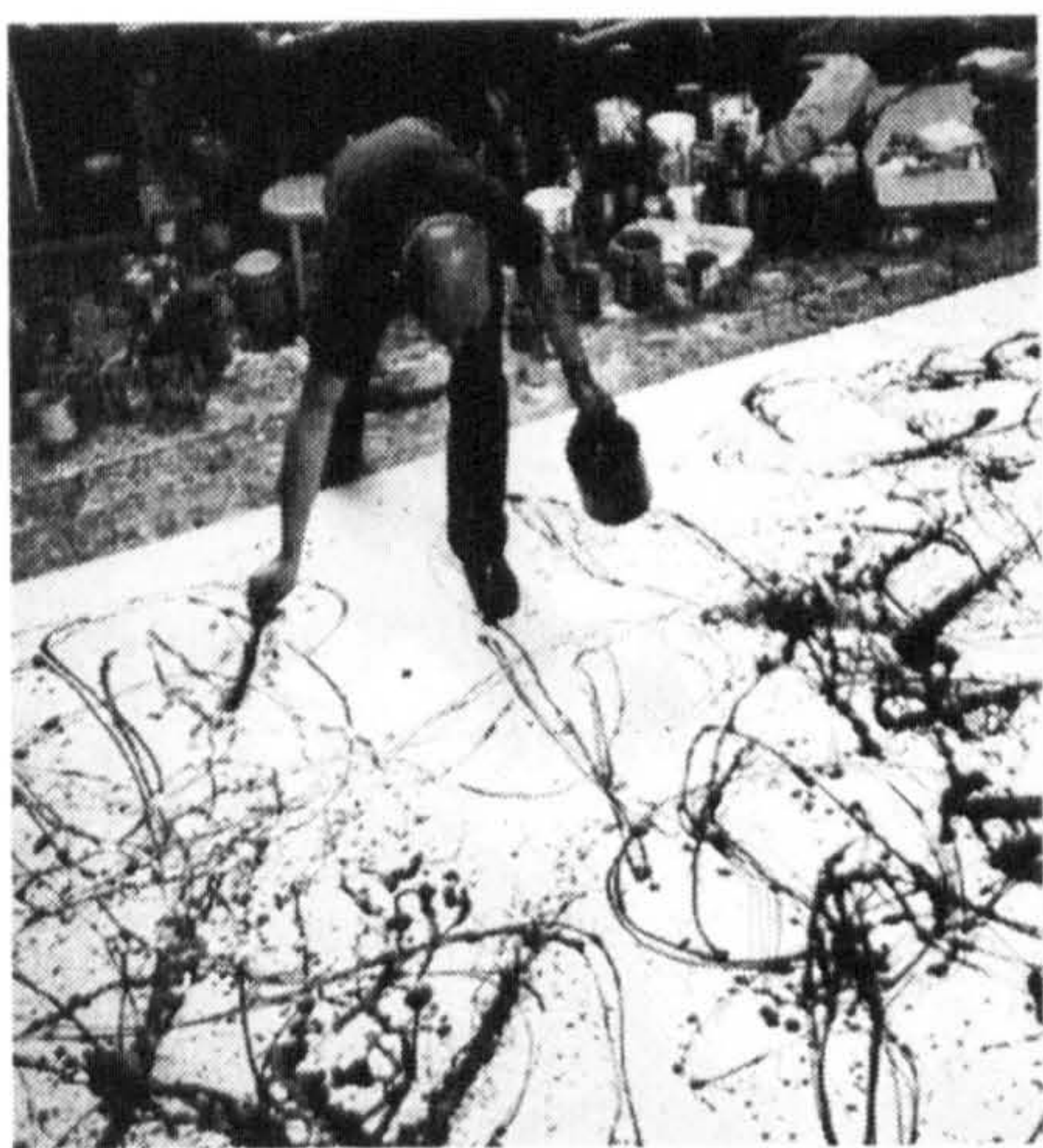
¹⁰¹ P. 44, Creation and Emptiness: Transforming the doctrine of creation in dialogue with the Kyoto School of Philosophy. Kristiansen, Roald E., Ph.D. Emory University, UMI, 1987

¹⁰² Lipton, Rothko, Smith, Tobey XXXIX Venice Biennale, under the auspices of The Museum of Art, New York. 1958

¹⁰³ P. 32, Zen in the Art of Archery, Eugen Herrigel, New York, Vintage Book, 1989

representational”,¹⁰⁴ and thus approach an understanding of *Ch'an* philosophy.

One particular aspect of Jackson Pollock's (1912-1956) practice is also relevant here. Whether influenced directly or not by Eastern art his process of action painting can be interpreted as showing characteristics common to certain *Ch'an* approaches. Hans Namuth's (1915-1990) photographs show Pollock painting on large lengths of canvases tacked to the studio floor - he is “in” the painting, during the process of making the work he becomes part of it, in a way that is different to Mark Tobey, he



18. Jackson Pollock at work, 1950. Photograph by Hans Namuth, Hans Namuth Estate. Courtesy Centre for Creative Photography, the University of Arizona.

too loses himself in the work. Jackson Pollock was born in Cody, Wyoming, U.S.A. He went to New York to study with the Art Students League in 1930. He is possibly the most well known artist of the American Abstract Expressionist movement. Pollock's “Automatism” or “Action painting” employed the dripping and splashing of paint freely over large lengths of canvas that had been rolled out on the floor. When Pollock

Painted, due to the large scale of his work, he would walk around the paintings, which lay flat on the floor, and paint by moving his body in a lively and energetic manner. Pollock's work is very dense in colour and texture and has the sense of a strong relationship with the surrounding space. The colours automatically overlap each other due to Pollock's fluidly chaotic, gestural method of painting, which allowed the element of accident. The rhythm of paintings thus became livelier and more kinetic, involving long, sweeping arcs of dripped line. An article from the Speed Exhibition at the Whitechapel Art Gallery stated,

¹⁰⁴ P. 57, *Abstraction and Culture*, Tema Celeste, No.32-33, Siracuse, Italy, Autumn 1991

“...the image of Pollock as the quintessential Action painter, whirling at high speed around his studio, spattering the floor canvas with hysterical, uncontrolled paint markings, is there for ever.”¹⁰⁵

Pollock had an interest in Oriental art. He was fascinated by the combination of discipline and spontaneity involved in Chinese brush painting, and the parallels drawn between the abstract marks in his own paintings and the linear marks of oriental calligraphy. The marks of Chinese calligraphy can exist almost in their own right, for their shape and structure as well as the significance of their written meaning. In a sense, Pollock would imbue the piece with his own experience, thus giving the painting a sense of life via his creative ability.

Pollock wrote:

“... I have no fears about making changes, destroying the image, etc., because the painting has a life of its own. I try to let it come through. It is only when I lose contact with the painting that the result is a mess. Otherwise there is pure harmony, an easy give and take, and the painting comes out well.”¹⁰⁶

Pollock's “drip” paintings are all-over linear patterns, full of energy, drama, and life. They are all immediate, direct and to an extent visually similar, although of differing sizes. The representation of Pollock's expressions in his painting creates an immediate “impactive” impression on the viewer. The principle concept of

¹⁰⁵ P. 17, Taylor, The Royal Academy Magazine, Number 61, winter, 1998

¹⁰⁶ P. 102, Abstract Expressionism: the triumph of American painting, Irving Sandler, Pall Mall P., London, 1970

Automatism was to emphasize the action of the subconscious, by creating a work through automatic physical action.¹⁰⁷ How does Pollock's work relate to space? Pollock worked on the floor and walked around the canvas in order to drip the paint into the appropriate places to create rhythm and depth. His "action painting" does not just challenge the notion of "picture" but also demonstrates evidence of turning the painting process into an environmental event. Walking through the space gave him a sense of being close to the painting and becoming part of it. The scales of his pictures were enlarged and so redefined their meaning within the architectural surroundings. He has also become part of the space and directly, immediately merges into one with the whole studio environment. The process of painting on canvas was described as "an artistic event". The actions, "Happenings" and the painting events presented a symptomatic stage of artistic practice in the early development of installation art.

Following the study of Jackson Pollock's "action painting", it is interesting to look at a more recent example - Brice Marden's (b.1938-) "Cold Mountain" series of paintings from the late 1980's. These paintings were influenced by Chinese art and philosophy and *Ch'an* study. Brice Marden created a series of huge panels (each panel being 108 x 144 inches) and other different sizes of linear paintings, etchings and drawings, which were inspired by Chinese monk and poet Han Shan's poem "Cold Mountain", which Marden viewed in their original Chinese calligraphy form.

Marden describes the way in which he worked as follows: "... *I did drawings using the form that the [Cold Mountain] poems take in the Chinese, then I start*

¹⁰⁷ P. 146, He Zheng Guang, European and American Modern Art, Taipei Shi, 1994

joining image and calligraphy, using the shape of the poem as a skeleton.”¹⁰⁸

Marden began by copying the calligraphy of the poems and then began to apply his own interpretation of them using large abstract black line ink drawing on a white background. He started the paintings from top to bottom then right to left, which is commonly seen in Chinese calligraphy or text. He used different tones of black and mixed them together with thin oil and applied them directly on to the canvas in order to create a range of grey tones and depth. He employed a limited palette of black, white, grey and green and used background colours such as white, grey or green to create a warm or cool emotional effect. As Marden stated: *“Isn’t it interesting that they are looking like the colour you find in Chinese painting.”¹⁰⁹*

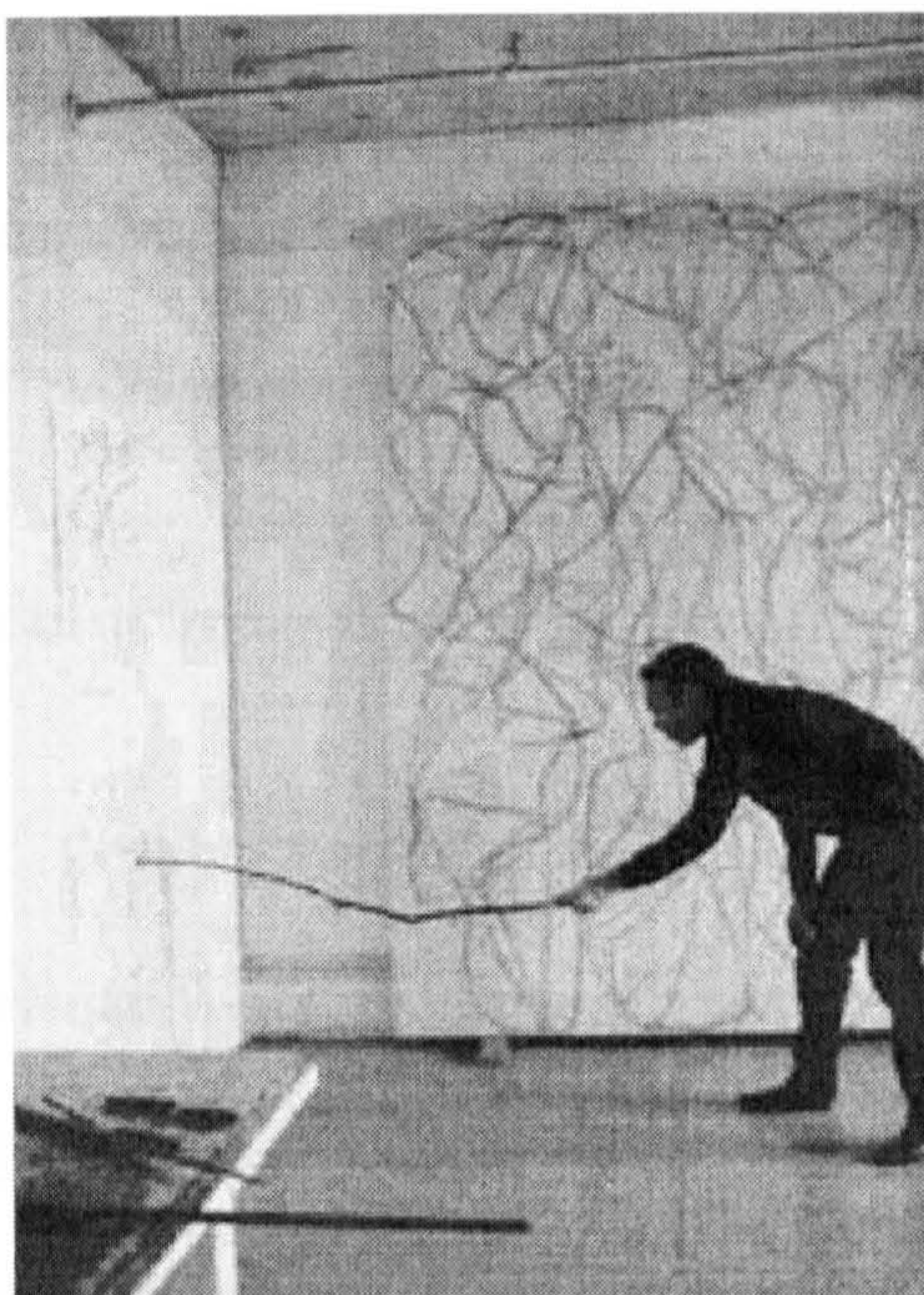
Chinese artists use ink line drawing to create the spatial arrangement found in calligraphy and landscape painting. The artist allows the drawing, painting and spirit of the creation to make the painting speak for itself. In Marden’s *“Cold Mountain”* paintings, the twisted lines are sometimes connected through the work or in small groups, to create an image with varying depth and distance.

Through the development of the *Cold Mountain* series paintings Marden was trying to combine calligraphy and painting, and transfer them into his own language of painting. As Marden described in an interview with Octavio Zaya *“I’ve been interested in Chinese poetry, in Taoism and in certain aspects of Eastern culture or thought. Spending a lot of time involved with the Cold Mountain’s poems -which express a sort of Tze-Tao-Zen ideal- was somewhat helpful in making the paintings. It was helpful to me as a human being and also as a painter.”¹¹⁰*

¹⁰⁸ <http://www.diachelsea.org/exhibs/marden/coldmountain/interview.html> 06/12/2004

¹⁰⁹ P. 65, Brice Marden – Cold Mountain, Brenda Richardson, Houston Fine Art Press, Texas, 1992

¹¹⁰ <http://www.caam.net/caamiaaa/cgi-bin/articulo.asp?idArticulo=610&idioma=EN>, 06/12/2004



19. Marden working on the painting in the studio

The canvases were big, so that he had to step back and considered his next stroke, and then return to the painting again to make the depth of painting go even further. As the illustration shows he worked on the painting with a long stick to extend the distance between himself and the painting. As he said, he wanted to “... *lose myself in the same way that I lose myself when I am drawing....for me,*

becomes a meditative state.”¹¹¹ So he aimed to lose himself in the painting and the movement of the process. He also said “*there are no formal issues, you’re just doing it, you’re not thinking about it.*”¹¹² And “*It’s more like knowing yourself by forgetting about yourself, learning not to be so involved with yourself.*” This is clearly related to *Ch’an* philosophical thought about losing yourself in the thing that you are doing, and becoming part of it.

When Marden was interviewed about his experience with calligraphy, *Cold Mountain* and *Ch’an* studies, he said that “*The Buddha is a human perfection. It’s not that I strive for human perfection, but it is a path. I look at Rembrandt, and that’s a path. Pollock is a path. It comes down to a single question: what are you going to strive for? It’s not that you’re going to get there. If I was concerned about getting there, I would choose a likely method — whether Zen study or something else — and I would do it. I guess in a way I have chosen my method, and my method*

¹¹¹ P. 70, Brice Marden — *Cold Mountain*, Brenda Richardson, Houston Fine Art Press, Texas, 1992

¹¹² P. 50, Brice Marden — *Cold Mountain*, Brenda Richardson, Houston Fine Art Press, Texas, 1992

is painting. To me, one of the most compelling aspects of modernism is its commitment to constant striving, to improve on what was there before. Zen's path is striving toward Buddhist enlightenment. I mean, the Buddha's perfect. And you..."¹¹³

Sculpture – A new Generation of Practitioner

In this Chapter so far I have outlined a gradual but significant influence that Oriental ideas and culture exerted in the West over the course of many centuries right through to the twentieth century. In the modern period, as I have described in the previous section, this influence is manifest in the work of a number of key artists, principally painters. In this section I wish to give an account of certain changes in sculptural practice that took place in the modern period. The twentieth century saw a broadening or expansion of modes of artistic expression and in the field of sculptural practice this has seen new forms, some of which have become almost like disciplines in themselves, and some of these have a pre-eminent position in current practice. I do not wish to argue that this diversification occurred as a principal result of Eastern influence, though we shall see the impact of Eastern ideas, but I will show that these new forms of fine art practice share characteristics of Eastern thinking and culture that I have described in the previous sections on *Ch'an* and *yi jing*. This sympathetic link becomes pertinent to my own practice: applying an interpretation from the standpoint of Oriental aesthetic or philosophical norms to certain forms of Western contemporary practice providing possibilities for its direction.

Over the centuries the practice of sculpture has evolved; during the development of different art periods sculpture as an artistic form has changed. From the earliest

¹¹³ P. 76, Brice Marden – Cold Mountain, Brenda Richardson, Houston Fine Art Press, Texas, 1992

times to the modern day, sculpture has been a way for people to greet Nature and to address religious or spiritual themes as well as to express individuality. We can trace the roots of what we might call today a “traditional” sculptural practice by selecting artists such as those from ancient Greece and Rome and connecting them with Renaissance sculptors such as Ghiberti (1378-1455), Donatello (1386-1466), and Michelangelo (1475-1564). In turn a link can be argued to those such as Jean Antoine Houdon (1741-1828), Antonio Canova (1757-1822) and as the nineteenth century turned into the twentieth to Auguste Rodin (1840-1917). These artists worked with materials such as stone, bronze and marble. They created figurative sculpture often in relation to religious and mythological subjects. Figurative sculptures represented the gods, saints, mythological characters, individuals or groups and were placed often in architectural settings. For example, in the Renaissance their location within churches and cathedrals relayed to the people the power of God and of the Catholic Church. They accompanied fresco paintings, stained glass windows inside or outside buildings or public spaces such as triumphal arches, churches, cathedrals, and courtyards. The statue becomes an individual element and the impression of physical movement and facial expression of the statue was also associated with its surroundings. Sculptors were commissioned by the church, royal families, private collectors or museums etc. to create an impression of imperial strength, or religious authority; to engage the audience with the power of their religion, leaders and historical events.

The year 1900 is not only the beginning of a new century but it is also an important milestone for sculptural practice as it moved into a new phase of development. In 1900 both Rodin and Picasso (1881-1973) were alive and they provide a useful point of contrast when considering the development of sculptural

practice in the modern period. Rodin brought to a lineage of sculpture, that might be traced back to the sculptures of ancient Greece and Rome, a more direct response to the human figure and through clay modelling cast into bronze, an immediacy and plasticity to sculptural form. His vigorous sculptures show a development in sculptural practice. However, the early part of the twentieth century saw developments in the visual arts that prompted artists to depart radically from the characteristics of the work of those such as Rodin. New aesthetic concepts such as Cubism, Expressionism and Fauvism, and the spontaneity of Futurism expanded the range of possibilities for visual art practice in the twentieth century. European artists also turned their attention to primitive painting and sculpture in order to find new elements to stimulate their creation. Picasso in the clearest example of an artist of the early twentieth century embracing the cultural, artistic and technological disruptions of the period. In so doing he become a pioneer of new forms of artistic expression and a pioneer of new forms of sculptural practice.

When we look into Rodin's sculptural work such as the Age of Bronze (1877), the Kiss (1888-1889), the Burghers of Calais (1889) and the unfinished work- the Gates of the Hell (1880-1917), we are able to rediscover the quality of the classical or Renaissance style, and direct or indirect inspiration from Michelangelo's and other antique sculpture. In the study of "the Age of Bronze", we can see the influence of Michelangelo's statues of figures. Rodin's "the Gates of Hell", seem to refer back to the door created by Lorenzo Ghiberti and described by Michelangelo as "the Gates of Paradise". Both are large public artworks which create a monumental statement employing traditional sculptural methods and materials of their own periods. In linking these two works together we can see how rooted in traditional sculptural practice Rodin was. They both employ human figures to

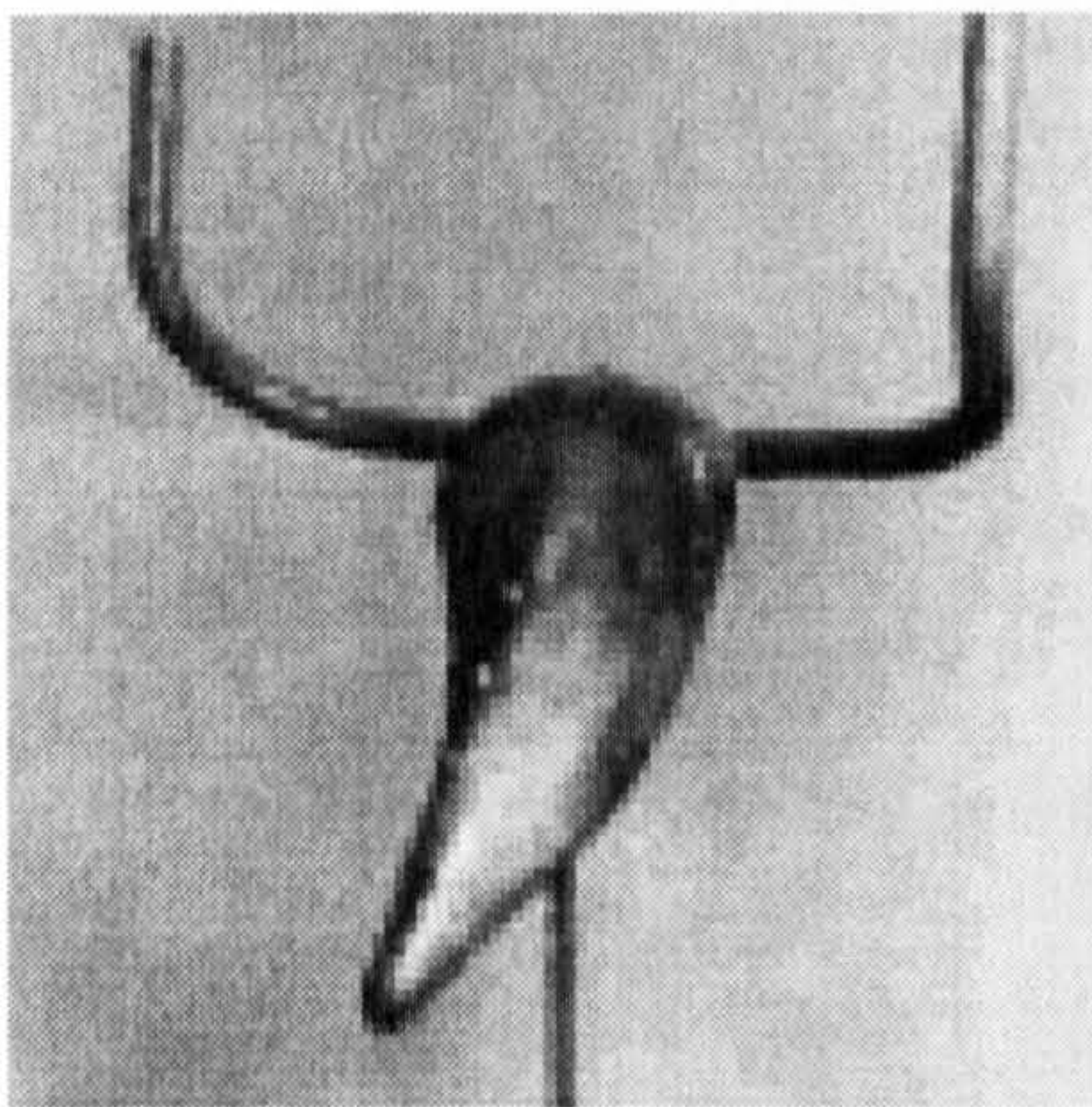
describe stories from the Bible. In each, perspective is used to enhance the sense of space created by relief, background and foreground are clearly defined. Both share a sense of engagement with the viewer both in their articulation of space and on the setting of naturalistic scenes.

Of course when Rodin was developing "the Gates of Hell" he was not only influenced by those such as Ghiberti and Michelangelo but also by more recent artists such as Delacroix, Gericault, and David. As mentioned previously he was also moving forward within this sphere of sculptural practice, his enthusiasm for nature being a key part of this. He described his own experience of Nature thus: "*I state quite clearly that when I have nothing to copy, I have no ideas; but when I see nature showing me forms, I immediately find something worth saying and even worth developing. Sometimes one believes that there is nothing to be found in a model, and then nature suddenly reveals the whole truth and allows one to leap with one bound to the absolute principle that lies behind things.*"¹¹⁴ This gave his sculpture a particular characteristic and his choices of location and setting also create for a different function and state of meaning from the work of earlier practitioners.

Moving into the early twentieth century, artists were still seeking for the truth behind form and expression, and arguing about the forms of representation. In order to break through traditional forms and concepts, artists were keen to explore new media and concepts. Compared to Rodin's sculptural practice, Picasso's artistic practice created a wide range of new concepts of sculptural practice and expanded the possibility of experimenting with different materials. During the development of

¹¹⁴ P. 61, Rodin Sculpture and Drawing, Catherine Lampert, The Arts Council of Great Britain, 1990

Cubism and Surrealism, he approached the motif from different viewpoints creating works in both two and three dimensions which could create a sense of continuity of form and space, that might represent the subject/object “fully”. This conceptual divergence from single point perspective is critical and matched in other moves away from accepted norms, for example in terms of materials and procedures. It might be argued that Picasso’s grounding in traditional, academic skills and approaches gave him the confidence to depart from them. In his sculptural works from 1912 he chose to use materials such as cardboard, wood, paper, metal, string etc. Using such materials he made works which conceptually deconstruct object and then recreate it in a new form. He also integrated painting with sculptural form, for example, the black paint in his assemblage “Violin” of 1915 indicates shadow and white represents the brightness. The representation of the object evidences a new conceptual approach to the form of the object. In other works Picasso explores further new possibilities for the making of sculpture: for example, in “Head of a Bull” (1943) he constructs his sculpture from a bicycle saddle together with



20. Picasso, Head of a Bull, 1943



21. Picasso, Baboon and Young, 1951

handlebars to represent a bull’s head. In the case of “Baboon and Young” (1951), a monkey’s head was made using found objects: two toy cars, cup handles to make the ears

and a jug for the body. He modelled the arms and the young baboon in plaster and attached the tail using a spiral from a car’s suspension. Picasso transformed found objects, converted them to playfully form representation of his subjects.

There is also a group of linear metal sculptures that Picasso made from around 1928 onwards which offer a different approach to sculpture. Working with the Spanish artist Gonzalez (1876-1942) as his assistant Picasso established spatially inventive sculptures such as “Construction in wire”, made in 1930. Two examples of this series of Picasso’s works used different gauges of linear iron wires welded into geometric forms such as circles, squares, curves, rectangles, triangles and circular disks constructed into a very abstract linear 3-dimensional sculpture. The linear wires create an interior and exterior space with an ever changing appearance depending on the viewer’s position. Picasso’s playful creation has changed the notion of aesthetic concepts and the meaning of sculpture.

Alongside the development and influence of Cubism, those such as Dadaists, Surrealists and Russian Constructivists were also trying to find new media and forms to express their own forms of sculptural practice. In 1913, Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) constructed the first “readymade” object, “Bicycle Wheel”, in which a spin-able bicycle wheel was built into a wooden chair. This work and others that followed demonstrated a new notion of sculptural practice unlike any that had gone before. They “allowed” or at least prompted Picasso to play with the bicycle saddle and handlebars of “Head of a Bull” referred to previously. This development in sculpture also redefined the relationship between the aesthetic space and the social space around us, by which I mean those found objects or already made objects were meaningless in themselves but the artist brought them into the artistic space as art objects. The meaning and function of the objects has redefined/re-valued and also challenged the impression of their environment – both the space they came from and where they came to.

The nature of the relationship between the artwork and the audience also began to be reconsidered. In 1913 the Russian painter Kasimir Malevich (1878-1935) claimed that “*Art no longer cares to serve the state and religion; it no longer wishes to illustrate the history of manners, it wants to have nothing further to do with object as such, and believes that it can exist, in and for itself, without things*”¹¹⁵ In proposing this viewpoint, artists made work which departed from tradition in both subject, form and concept. New kinds of material were used and new kinds of art object made. Found objects, displaced from their everyday environment, were put into galleries where the audience did not expect to see them. The traditional relationship between the artwork and viewer was questioned, the viewer’s impression of artistic creation challenged and expanded. This view gives us a framework about artworks that have a different reference point, that in a way “speak for themselves” rather than being depictions of something seen or observed.

Through the modern period of the twentieth century the developments in sculptural practice typified by the work of those such as Picasso or Duchamp continued apace. The concept of a new development gives a “diagram” for sculpture which gives the artist a freedom to express the simplest of forms within the aesthetic nature of the materials. The meaning of sculpture became redefined from the traditional point of view, and was shifted from the traditional perspective and focus of the experience of looking at painting and sculpture, towards something one can experience and participate physically and holistically. The perception of sculpture changed and the materials for its making became broadened from their primal limitations. Michael Archer described the explosion of the use of various materials

¹¹⁵ P. 244, Concepts of Modern Art, from Fauvism to Postmodernism, Nikos Stangos, Thames and Hudson, London, 1997

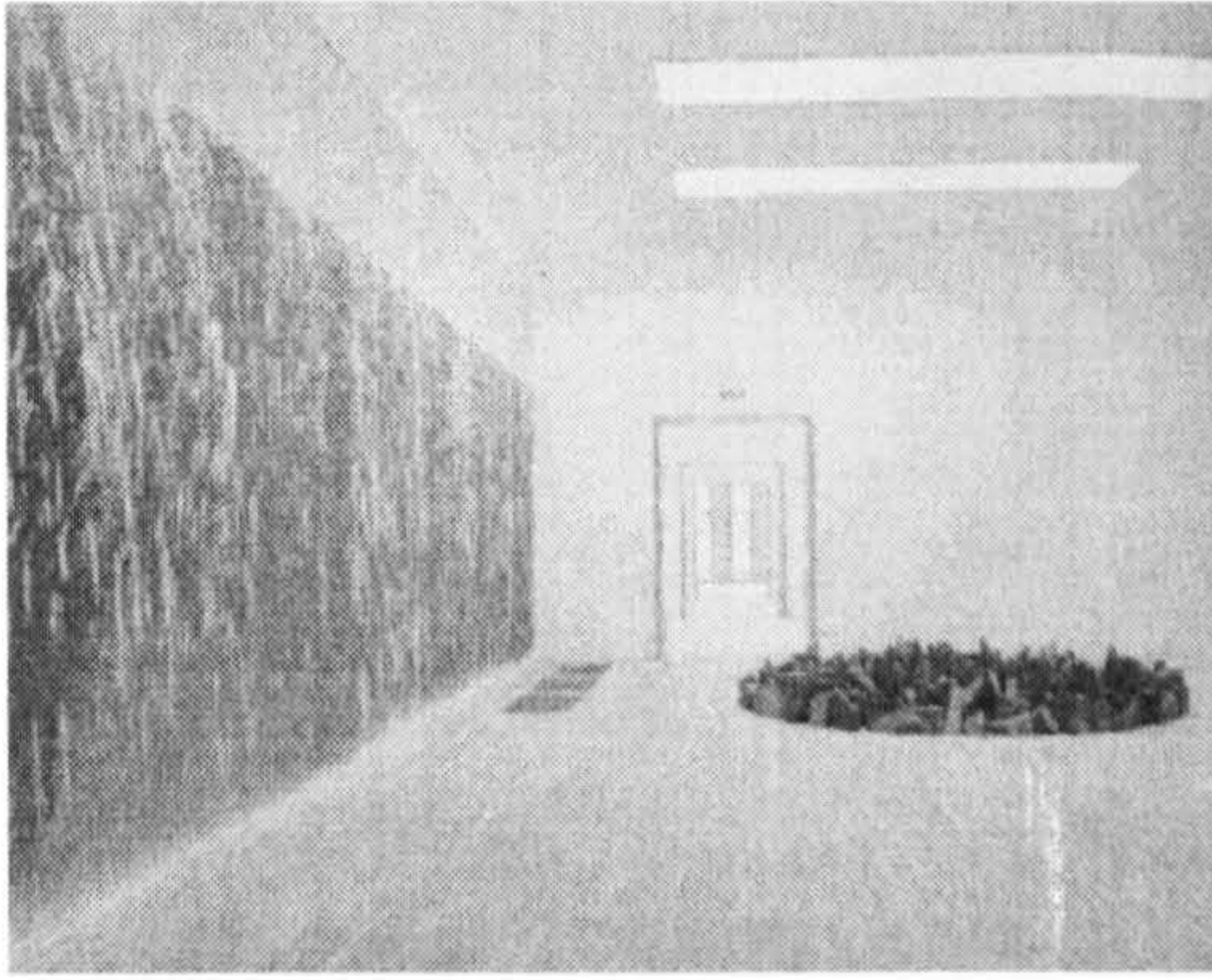
in *Art since 1960*, “there no longer seems to be any particular materials that enjoy the privilege of being immediately recognisable as the stuff of art.”¹¹⁶ The range of materials available as sculptural material expanded to include industrial products, natural materials such as earth and water, light, sound, electrical equipment... the possibilities became endless by the start of the twenty-first century.

On a visit to Tate Modern we can see displays that offer a wide range of information for the audience to understand the development of contemporary artists’ creation and their concepts of sculpture. Two recent exhibitions in the Tate Modern, of the work of Donald Judd and Constantin Brancusi, illustrate development in twentieth century sculptural practice. They belonged to two different generations of sculptural practice and have different sensitivity about the materials they chose to work with. Brancusi used some traditional sculptural materials such as wood, stone and bronze but approached them in a different way from the traditional masters. The intrinsic, natural qualities of his materials, such as the rough surface of wood, and the polished appearance of stone, marble and bronze, are employed to create forms which provide an abstract sense of simplicity. Brancusi integrated the means of display (stand or plinth) as part of the sculpture, paying attention to their form, material and type of construction. Brancusi’s sculptures have their roots in the natural world. Judd on the other hand worked with concepts and forms of Minimalism¹¹⁷ employing “non art” industrial materials such as stainless steel, Plexiglas and plywood to create simple, geometric abstract forms. These seem to reference architecture and pure abstraction rather than being an abstraction from the

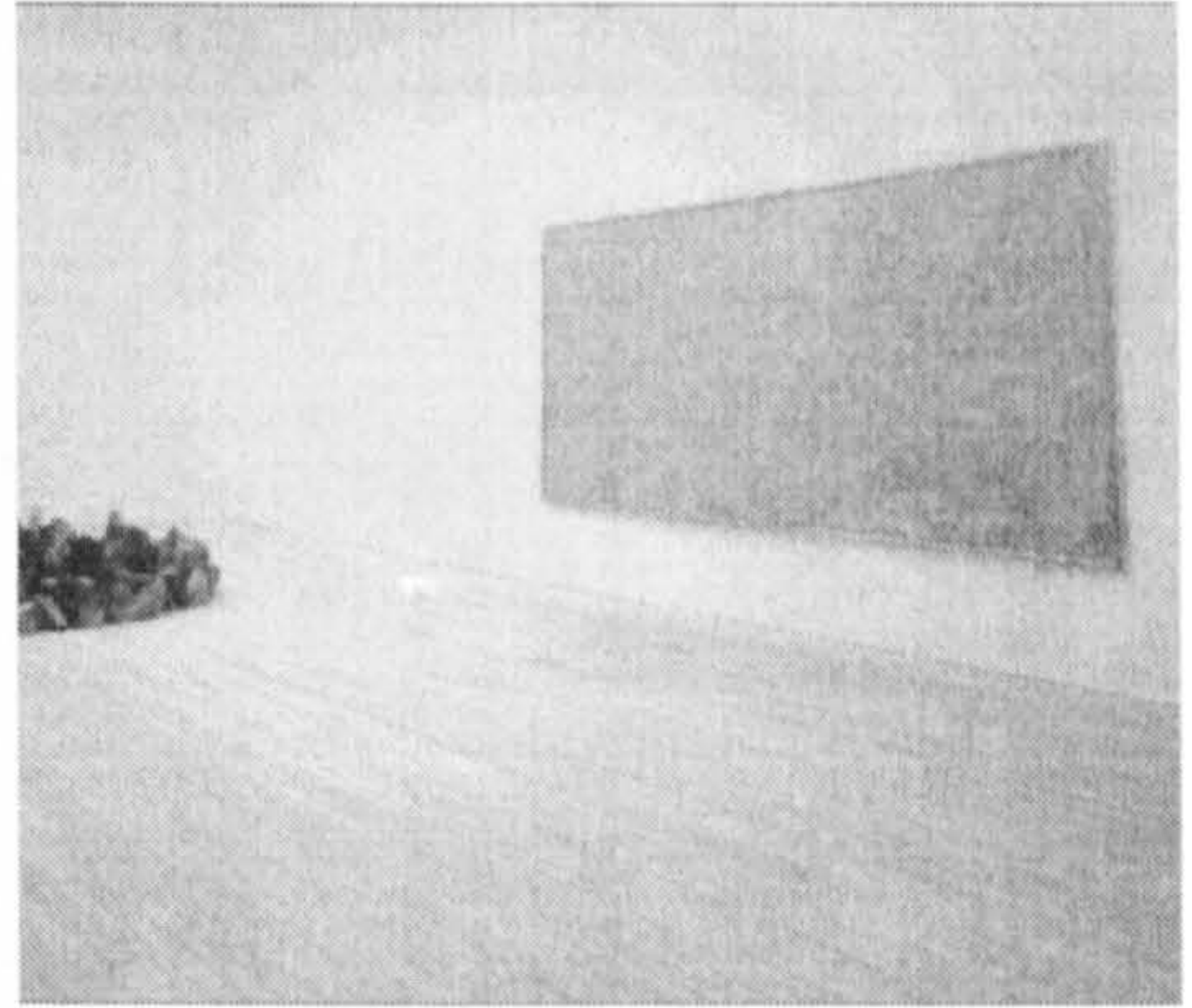
¹¹⁶ P. 6, *Art since 1960*, Michael Archer, Thames & Hudson. London, 1997

¹¹⁷ According tot the Tate Gallery: *An Illustrated Companion* (1979), ‘ The theory of minimalism is that without the diverting presence of “composition”, and by the use of plain, often industrial, materials arranged in geometrical of highly simplified configurations we may experience all the more strongly the pure qualities of colour, form, space and materials.’ P. 470, *The Oxford Dictionary of Art*. Third edition, 2004

natural world. Judd mounted his objects on the wall or directly placed them on the floor, without plinths or presentational devices. The free standing sculpture and the occupation of the space allowed the observer to view his work from the inside as well as outside. The physical relationship to the viewer was thus very important.



22. Richard Long, *Waterfall Line*, 2000



23. Monet, *Water Lilies after 1916*

Another example from Tate Modern is instructive. When Tate Modern first opened one room displayed a large painting of water lilies by Monet alongside Richard Long's "*Waterfall Line*" made using mud collected from the River Avon and applied directly to the gallery wall. Monet used oil paint to express the beauty of the natural scenery in his *Water lilies* paintings, expressing his relationship with nature through an impressionistic description based on observation. In contemporary visual art practice it can be argued that artists now have the freedom to find the most appropriate media to express their ideas and to emphasise the content of the work. It can be argued too that for contemporary artists working in certain areas a greater range of sources, such as political, economic, social, and cultural, are used – there has been a significant move away from the visual as primary source material and that this reflects the variety and complexity of our daily experience. Thus in Richard Long's "*Waterfall Line*", 2000, his choice of mud has a particular meaning. Its direct application offers a further level of meaning, its sourcing from the River Avon another and the particular formal arrangement of the piece extends the subject of the

piece, and so on. Long freely scraped his hand marks using white mud and created a white rectangular area on top of a dark area on a large gallery wall. The mud was dripping naturally from the top to the bottom and created an impression of water splashing down from the top of what might be read as a waterfall. The hand painted marks recorded the existence and time of Long being in the gallery. The scale of the artwork created a huge visual impact to the viewer so that the audience became part of the work. In another example of his work with nature in 1967, "A Line Made by Walking", he repeatedly walked in a straight line across the landscape until a line appeared worn into the ground. This line altered the appearance of the landscape and represented the existence of his movement in a field in Somerset, England. Through the physical engagement with landscape and the use of appropriate natural materials (the natural environment and his own action) he illustrates, in a clear and simple way, the relationship between Man and Nature. The artwork is made "in situ" and then re-presented as a photograph in the gallery space. Also in the gallery he marked his journey as a line on a map and described it as "sculpture". This is a different interpretation of his original walked line, and the creation of a new form of sculpture. Thus three pieces of material can be said to exist and to form the artwork: the site itself, the photograph and the map.

In modern sculptural practice, the meaning of spatial environment, use of materials, the relationship between artwork, artist and audience has been redefined. The relationship between the sculpture and the environment has changed: sculptures can be said to have been released from the pedestal: now different varieties of display and placement are used, such as directly on the floor, lent against the wall, installed in an architectural space or an open space... allowing artists infinite freedom to express their ideas.

Spatial Manipulation and the Development of “Installation”

From the 1950s onwards, artists started to establish new concepts which examined new interpretations of the relationship of their creations to the notion of site. These new possibilities became known as what we would now describe as “installation art”. Radically different from traditional boundary settings these new forms of sculpture renewed the relationship between artwork, artist, audience and location/space.

In the early development of Happenings, Allan Kaprow (b.1927), Jim Dine (b.1935), Claes Oldenburg (b.1929), Robert Rauschenberg (b.1925) and Roy Lichtenstein (1923-1997) moved possibilities of creation towards real spaces. The aesthetic “event” or “Happening” at this time was a combination of theatre and visual arts and was mainly developed from the amalgamation of assemblage and environment and connected strongly to the ideal of audience participation. “*The assemblage was something constructed to be contemplated from outside, to be ‘handled or walked around’, and the environment something to be ‘walked into’, something by which the observer was enveloped and manipulated.*”¹¹⁸ The “Happening” was a spontaneous event and required the audience’s co-operation to participate with it. The environment became not confined in a gallery or museum space but brought the performance into an ordinary place such as a market place or street. These were places which were much closer to the situation of everyday life and the real audience.

Often in the beginning of the development of installation the word “environment” was commonly used to described such new forms of practice. Allan

¹¹⁸ The Oxford Dictionary of Art, 1997

Kaprow in 1958 used the word “environment” in relation to his room scale work at the Hansa Gallery. The term “environmental” was picked up by critics to describe a certain range of works for two decades. While the term was still popular in the mid 1970s this was conjoined with other terminology such as “project art” or “temporary art”. In 1971, Daniel Buren proposes in his essay “*The Function of the Studio*” that “*Hasn’t the term installation come to replace exhibition?*”¹¹⁹ “Installation” began to be used as a term for the creation of an artwork in a specific space. The word “install” indicates a particular relationship to and integration with the space. Spatial engagement of both artwork and viewer – the body’s movement within the exhibition surroundings – became critical to the idea of installation. As the Oxford Dictionary of Arts recorded the early definition of this form of practice was as follows: “*A term can be applied very generally to the disposition of objects in an exhibition (the hanging of paintings, the arrangement of sculptures, and so on) but which also has the more specific meaning of a one-off work (often a large-scale assemblage) conceived for and usually more or less filling a specific interior (generally that of a gallery).*”¹²⁰

With installation the artist creates a 3-dimensional artwork which manipulates space by transforming and regenerating spaces within a pre-existing environment. Installation also becomes a kind of vehicle that allows issues of audience participation, choice of media, relationship between internal and external world, spatial integration and engagement, political, social and cultural content to co-exist.

The form of installation can be very abstract or pictorial, and the relationship

¹¹⁹ P. xi, From Margin to Centre, the spaces of installation art. Reiss, Julie H. The MIT press Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, 1999

¹²⁰ P. 358, The Oxford Dictionary of Art, Third Edition, 2004

with the surrounding environment can be controlled or made independent by the artist's intentions. The issues of "*site specificity, institutional critique, temporality*"¹²¹, and ephemeral nature of the forms, are the most common characteristics of installation. Those concepts are also widely shared by Environmental art and Performance.

A single exhibition often creates a unique purpose in a specific space for a temporary period, bringing together the various materials into a given space and transforming the site. Therefore, an installation practice is always leaning towards having a certain category of symbiotic relationship in mind between the audience and the artwork, the artwork and the space, and the space and the audience's mind. The artist might create an installation in an architectural space that is large enough for the audience to walk through. The artwork provides an experiential environment and welcomes the audience to participate in the completion of the work of art. For example, contemporary American installation artist James Turrell (b.1943) brought light into a space and through visual observation and physical contact enabled the viewer to understand more of what they were about to experience. His light installation challenged more than their expectations about materials and the conventions of the space.

"the installation was empirical; no plans were preconceived and the position of each panel was determined solely as a result of consideration of the space and location of earlier placement of panels. Each installation would result in a completely different improvisation to create a constructivist work of art on

¹²¹ P. xiii. From Margin to Centre, the spaces of installation art. Reiss, Julie H. The MIT press Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, 1999

environmental scale.”¹²²

Many artists create an installation with his/her own subjective consciousness employed to manipulate the spatial presentation. The artwork and the space provide a “physical-psychological” experimental environment which transforms the practical environment into a living space which can “speak”. In “*Site-specific art*”, Nick Kaye quoted Michel de Certeau’s words about the definition of the artistic space, “*In relation to place, space is like the word when it is spoken, that is, when it is caught in the ambiguity of an actualisation, transformed into a term dependent upon many different conventions, situated as the act of a present (or of a time), and modified by the transformations caused by successive contexts.*”¹²³ One therefore can describe the “space” as a practical environment. One brings in the materials and creates the content of the space and draws attention to these to challenge the audience’s preconception of the aesthetics of a space. The materials can either co-operate with the space well and fully express one’s concept or, equally, reject the artist’s intentions. The artwork creates the space, and the space presents the artwork. Relevantly, too, Oriental environmental sculpture of the past is carefully constructed in a place, which welcomes the observer to participate in the deliberate arrangement. Through visual observation and physical attachment the viewer is able to engage himself or herself in a journey of real time and space.

Audience Participation

Within the history of sculpture the norm of the model/statue has existed and the connection within an architectural environment was restricted. The relationship

¹²² P. 124, *Installation art*, Michael Archer, Thames and Hudson Ltd, London, 1994

¹²³ P. 5, *Site-Specific art- Performance, place and documentation*, Nick Kaye, Routledge, London, 2000

between the artwork and the audience was also limited. It was usual for the audience to “inspect” a sculpture at a distance, rather than to experience it fully in its entirety. This kind of visual contact meant that the viewer engaged with the sculpture on a single level, from the outside in the physical and psychological sense.

In the modern period through developments such as futurism, constructivism, conceptual art and performance art etc., artists expanded their ideas and involved the audience in new ways, generally less as observers and more as participants in various ways. As I described above the meaning and position of the audience changed into a different category from inspection to a more personal involvement. The relationship between the artist, artwork and audience became much closer and they become part of each other. Artists created a different form and freedom to express their ideas of audience involvement.

The interaction and participation of the audience are critical issues in installation practice. The meaning of participation in installation practice reshapes the role and position of the viewer. In installation the artist offers the audience a unique opportunity to explore their perception: change of physical position, for example, enable them to experience the artwork more fully, sometimes on a number of sensory levels. A contemporary American sculpture artist, Mowry Baden (b.1936), gave his opinion about the spectator’s role in installation practice and the time-based aspect of audience involvement, “*Perception and action occur in a time continuum. Most actions alter the visual and tactile field sufficiently to make new judgments possible.*”¹²⁴ The impermanent nature of installation and the different attitude towards the audience’s engagement changed views and positions of both artists and

¹²⁴ P. 14, *Blurring the Boundaries, Installation art 1969-1996*, Edited by Anne Farrell, Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego. 1997

their audience concerning both aesthetics and definitions of what art could be. The involvement of the audience within the creation unites the audience with the artwork and the space. This seems to echo the Unity of Dharma, the unity of wisdom, described in Chapter 1.

It can be argued that installation creates a sense of self-awareness in the viewer and that this competes, or contributes to, the work. The viewers senses are heightened by work in which they play a role, which for example, might include the aural as well as the visual. Different responses can be said to affect the work, to have an influence on it, enriching the creation. The work therefore is never quite fixed. Through visual contact and physical movement, the inner sensation of the audience communicates with the external display. Without the audience's engagement, the artwork would not come to life. As philosopher Michel de Certeau described, "*a place is the order (of whatever kind) in accordance with which elements are distributed in relationship of coexistence. It thus excludes the possibility of two things being in the same location [place].*" ¹²⁵ An installation could be described as a communication place where those two elements (the audience and the artwork) are brought to coexist together.

Material

The range of artistic materials increased during the twentieth century. Many new kinds of material were employed by artists to provide ideas for their creations. As described earlier, artists such as Duchamp and Picasso used found objects to create a piece of artwork. Furthermore, during the mid-60s and mid-70s, Minimalist artists

¹²⁵ P. 4, Site-Specific Art- Performance, place and documentation, Nick Kaye, Routledge, London, 2000

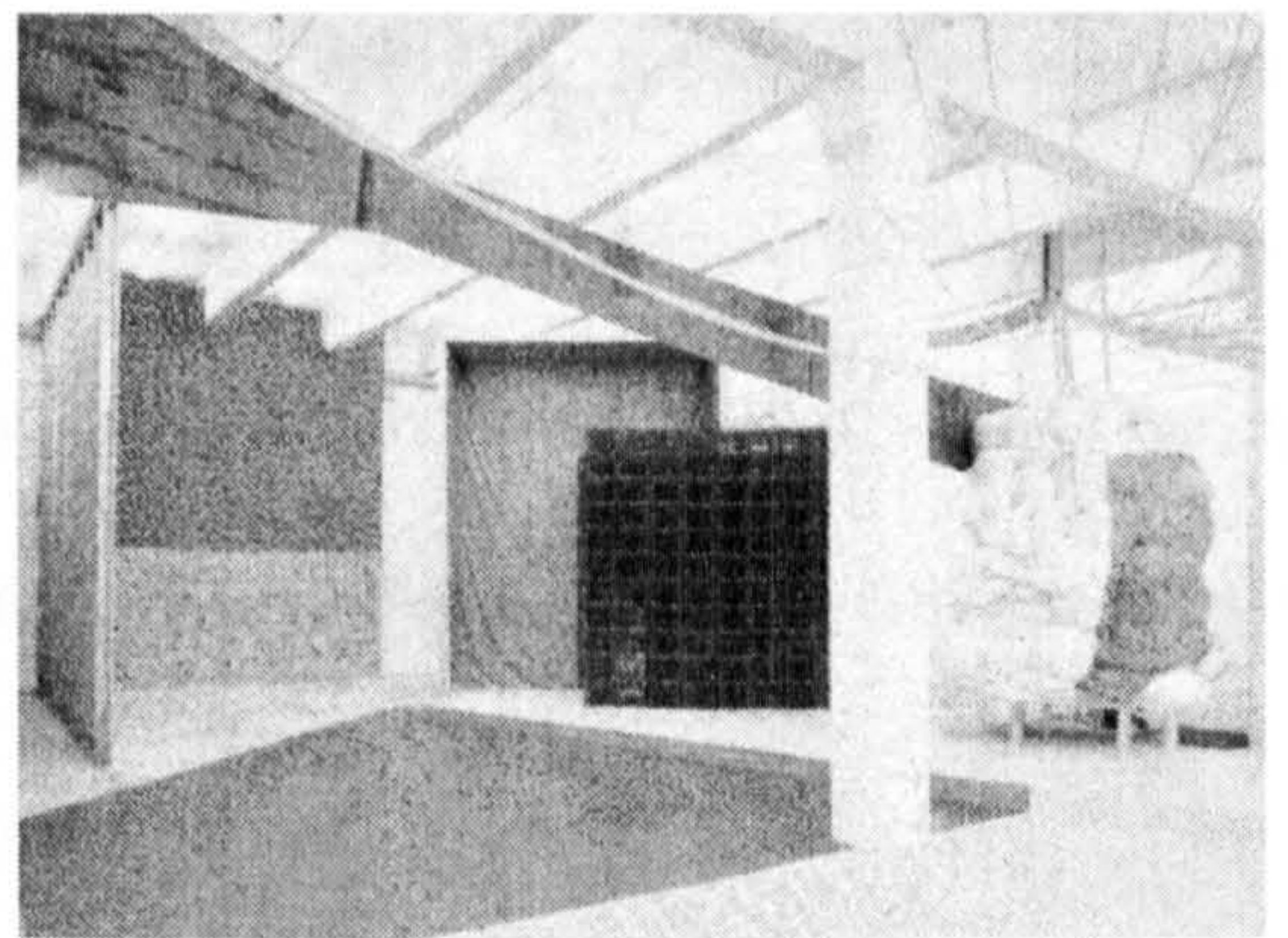
such as Carl Andre (b.1935), Dan Flavin (1933-1996), and Robert Morris (b.1931), amongst others, began to choose raw materials or found objects, not usually recognized as the “material” of art. Donald Judd (1928-1994), and Tony Smith (1912-1981) also used non-art materials to present their concepts. These artists used materials such as: Carl Andre’s “Pyre” (1971) simply constructed using eight units of raw wooden blocks in a three-dimensional rectangular shape (30.5 x 30.5 x 91.4cm for each block); Dan Flavin used an 8 ft. high fluorescent tube to create “Monument for V. Tatlin” (1968); Robert Morris used industrial waste such as thread waste, mirrors, asphalt, aluminium, lead, felt, copper, and steel to create “Untitled” (1968); Donald Judd created “Untitled” in 1967 by using galvanized iron with green lacquer and Tony Smith made “Die” (1962) with 6 foot high black steel. The development of new forms of sculptural practice, such as Minimalism, Post-Minimalism, Conceptual Art, Land Art and Installation, has further expanded the range of materials used. As a result there is no limitation of locations or materials in contemporary installation practice and artists have freedom to use any material.

The critical aspect to this wealth of possibility is the search for the appropriate material. The artist searches for the material which is suitable for their particular intentions including subject, form, space, and context. For example, Nam June Paik used video technology to examine new possibilities of communication; British artists Gilbert and George explored ideas of form or style in different contexts in pieces such as “Singing Sculptures” (1970) in which they used their own bodies as “living sculptures”; German artist Wolfgang Laib (b.1950) employed natural materials such as pollen and bee wax to create installations which are concerned with natural processes; in “20:50”¹²⁶, Richard Wilson (b.1953) created a artwork

¹²⁶ First shown at Matt’s Gallery and finally purchased and installed in Charles Saatchi’s Gallery in

which used the reflective qualities of sump oil to transform the gallery space so that audiences could not see what the depth of the oil was; Dan Graham (b.1942) chose to work with large glass windows (*Rooftop Urban Park Project*) to create an installation which related to urban architecture and which explored the audiences' social position in relation to their environment and Gordon Matta-Clark (1945-1978), used buildings as his raw material, most typically cutting into them, slicing them apart to discuss the agendas of space, urban life and local communities.

An artist like Jessica Stockholder (b.1959) provides another example of the extended range of materials available to the contemporary artist. She constructs her creations from materials such as cars, furniture, clothes, found objects and paint: so called low-grade, synthetic, "everyday



24. Jessica Stockholder, *Your Skin in this Weather Bourne Eye-Threads & Swollen Perfume*. 548 West Street, NYC. October 5, 1995 - June 23, 1996

material". She reconstructs the found objects in different locations, galleries, museums or open environments, and reorientates the audience's preconceptions of those materials. Stockholder's raw materials have a very low aesthetic value and are often accompanied with bright paint colours on a large scale. As she stated, her concept of using bright colours is that "*it enables me to make things abstract and full of feeling. It is the intersection between fiction and objects, and the mundane stuff in the world that is the focus of my work.*"¹²⁷ Colour is used to connect the work together across space. Her installation "*Your Skin in this Weather Bourne*

1987.

¹²⁷ <http://www.foodcoop.com/linewaiters/stockholder.html> 14/08/2004

Eye-Threads & Swollen Perfume” in the Dia centre, New York, October, 1995 included a pink carpet, a blue plastic pool liner, a yellow painted floor and a green walk way leading the audience into her installation.

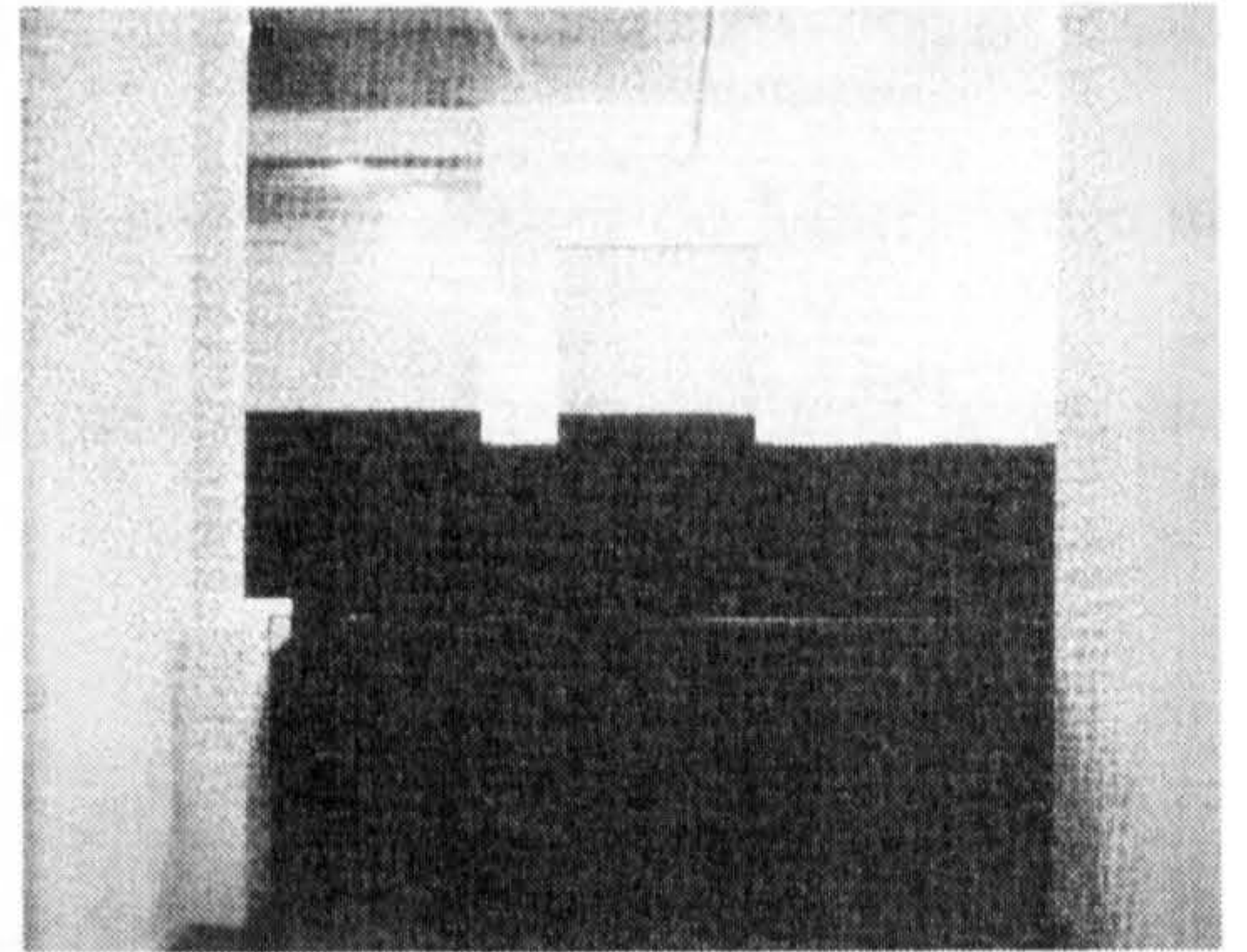
If we take a walk through the collection of Tate Modern or browse through book surveys of installation art such as “*Installation Art*”¹²⁸, we can see works made in wood, charcoal, stone, turmeric spice, clay, therapy tables, carpet, potted plants, laser light, bamboo, lead, glass, earth, rusting industrial equipment, cardboard, houses, prints, coal, steel, foil, light tubes, metal rods, pollen, boats, water, computer wastes, oil, televisions, iron shovels, vinyl records, video, photographic panels, texts, furniture, bones, plastic plates, cars etc. the list is almost endless, it is worth bearing in mind too that the expression of the nature of the materials alone is enough to give meaning to a sculpture.

Nature

As I have described earlier the modern period has seen a questioning of the gallery space and an exploration of the idea of site. Consequently, from the 1960’s a number of artists such as Michael Heizer (b.1944), Walter De Maria and Robert Smithson began to shift their artwork into exterior natural surroundings and began to employ Nature as part of their creation.

¹²⁸ Michael Archer. Thames and Hudson Ltd, London, 1994

Why do artists want to move their work into open space? Escaping from manmade environments to a natural situation creates new possibilities for artists to work with. The construction of forms in a natural setting relocates the position of artist and audience. The internal exhibition space is not always suitable for the artist to realise his/her intentions and some artists shift sculpture from the standard indoor space into different external locations. Another aspect of this relation to nature is that some artists turned earth into a medium, bring the land, as it were, into the gallery space. For example, De Maria constructed "The New York Earth Room" (1977), an installation in which a large quantity of earth, peat and bark was placed in an interior space.



25. De Maria, *The New York Earth Room*, 1977. Photograph by John Cliett.

The raw natural material brought the audience into "conversation" with nature within an urban environment. Robert Smithson created his famous "Nonsite" (1968) in which a group of trapezoid-shaped photographs of a particular site were hung on the wall and echoed the same shaped wooden bins on the floor which contained limestone. In this piece the external space is brought into the interior both in terms image (the photographs) and material (the limestone), these then form a relationship both to one another and to the gallery space itself through their formal arrangement. Notion of space are therefore questioned in a number of ways.

By the late sixties artists were examining possibilities for working in response to exterior sites, where landscape became a meaningful space for their creation. These artists chose earth, stone, water and other natural materials to make a mark, change or restructure the landscape space. It could be argued that this interest in these alternative, landscape sites was in reaction not simply to the gallery space itself, but

what it symbolized – the financial and cultural structures to which it belonged. There is a suggestion of rebellion in the work of the early land artist. As Michael Heizer stated: *“the position art as malleable barter-exchange item falters as the cumulative economic structure gluts. The museums and collections are stuffed, the floors are sagging, but the real space still exists.”*¹²⁹

We are able to see some of these characteristic concepts in the artwork of both Robert Smithson and Walter de Maria. Robert Smithson and Walter de Maria were at the forefront of this development of using natural material and nature itself to create artworks.

From the literature on Robert Smithson we know that he was interested in natural prehistoric history and collecting fossils and shells in his childhood, when he travelled with his parents to the Western U.S.A. He was interested in archetypal natural things and touched by those prehistoric objects. It could be argued that this formative influence had a bearing on Smithson’s approach to his own work and that of others: he took a particular interest in the history, context and meaning of a work. In his work he became curious about location, about how particular locations offered specific opportunities and contexts for his work. His interest was in the entire history of the American west and preoccupation with notions of prehistoric heritages within the landscape – *“the mother earth which contains life and death and rebirth”*¹³⁰ – could be one of the reasons for him to create the significant earthwork *“Spiral Jetty”* (1970). In this piece, located on the Great Salt Lake, Utah, the artist constructed a spiral-shaped jetty, 1500 feet long and 15 feet wide that stretches out

¹²⁹ P. 326. Art since 1940. Strategies of Being, second edition Jonathan Finberg. Laurence King Publishing, 2000

¹³⁰ P. 14, Between Landscape Architecture and Land Art. Udo Weilacher, with Forewords by John Dixon Hunt and Stephen Bann, Verlag Fur Architektur, Basel, Switzerland, 1996

counter-clockwise into the semi-transparent red water, using 6,650 tons of black basalt rocks and earth from the site. Smithson used the site of an abandoned oil well and was interested in this polluted environment: the “*post-industrial space subject to natural forces*.”¹³¹ Over time white salt crystals precipitated around the edges of the jetty and the distinction between the Spiral Jetty and the lake gradually changed, a process of disappearance or “absorption” began: the artificial and natural becoming part of each other.

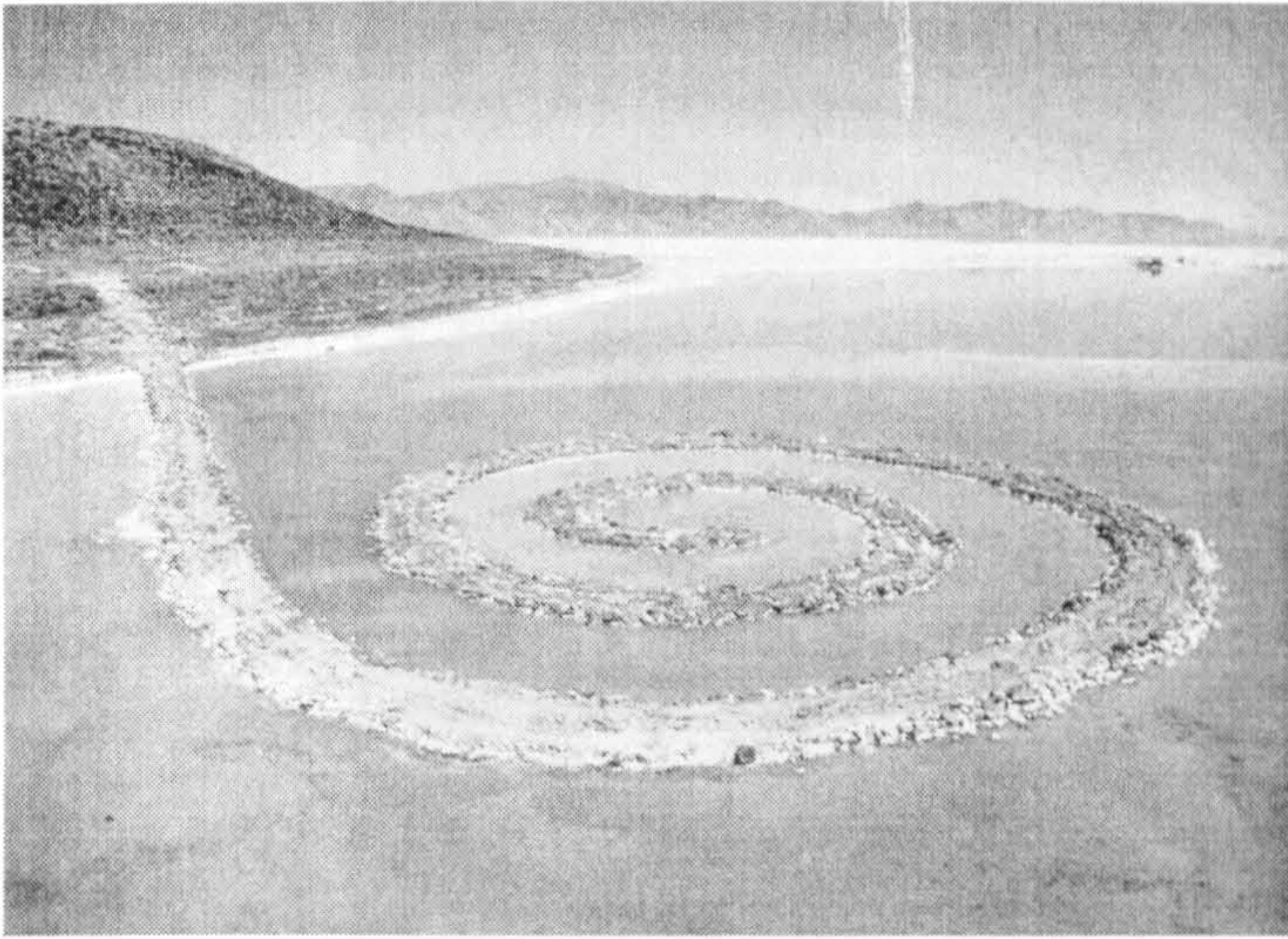
The water level was uncommonly low when Smithson constructed the jetty in 1970. Few people ever really walked along or saw the Jetty before it was taken by natural forces. For three decades, the work has been hidden under the surface of the lake and remained unseen. Changes in water levels (a prolonged drought) have meant that the jetty has gradually re-emerged after 30 years and has now become totally exposed. Recently Bob Phillips, who was foreman of the Ogden contract team who helped Smithson to construct the jetty described: “Now the rocks are encrusted with white salt crystals and it’s lying in what looks like a massive snow field.”¹³² According to an artist Francis Scorzelli from Santa Barbara, California who walked on the jetty: “He (Smithson) wanted nature to take over, and to see what happened [to his earth works] over time.”¹³³ It is possible to walk along the white spiral jetty at different times and to experience it anew.

¹³¹ P. 545, *Art of the 20th Century*, Edited by Ingo F. Walther, Taschen, Koln, 2000

¹³²

<http://arts.telegraph.co.uk/core/Content/displayPrintable.jhtml?xml=/arts/2004/08/07/basalt07.xml&site=6>, <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/magazine/story/0,,1200803,00.html>,
http://www.sltrib.com/outdoors/ci_2417644 5/10/2004

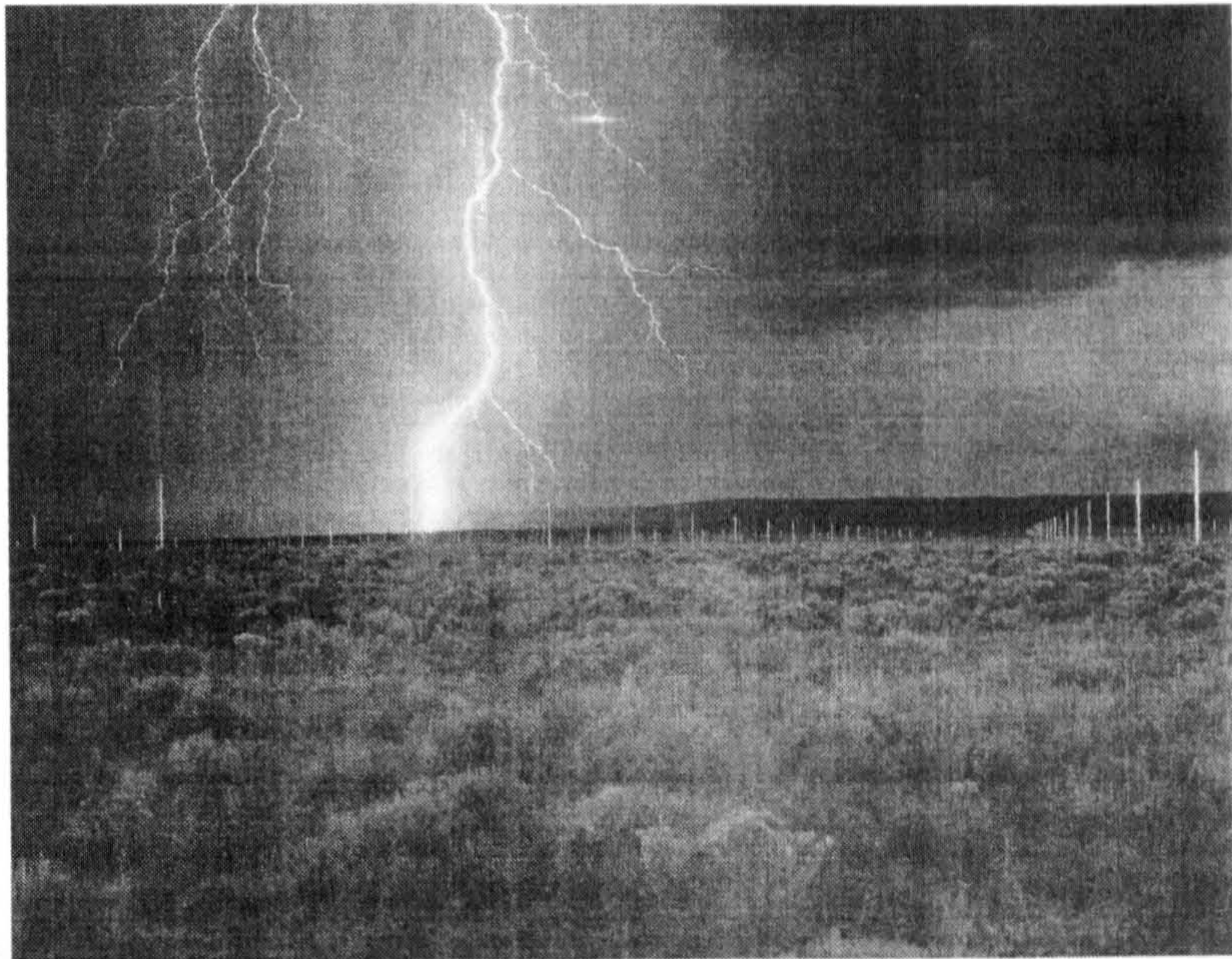
¹³³ http://www.sltrib.com/outdoors/ci_2417644 5/10/2004



26. Robert Smithson, *Spiral Jetty*, April 1970. Great Salt Lake, Utah. Photograph by Gianfranco gorgoni, Courtesy weber Gallery, New York. 27. Photograph by Melissa Cobern
28. Utah Division of Wildlife Resources 2003

We can see therefore that the jetty has become part of an ever-changing natural process and is still continuing to change. The work has transformed over time but remains true to the ideas and concepts of time, history and site with which Smithson began and which are evidenced in his documentary material from 1970.

Walter De Maria's worked within the same field as artists such as Smithson but his approach was different. He did not reconstruct the landscape, change the ground into different shapes or create markers on the ground as some of his contemporaries did. De Maria shifted materials such as earth into man-made settings (internal space) or attached man-made materials to natural surroundings (external space) and chose to work with natural phenomenon. For example, this is particularly apparent in his "*Lightning Field*" (1971-7). This piece shows his artistic attachment to the forces of Nature, De Maria highlights the sense of time and size in Nature.



29. Walter De Maria. *The lightning Field*, 1977. Stainless steel poles, average height 20ft 7 1/2in, Near Quemado, New Mexico. Photograph by John Cliett.

De Maria constructed 400 stainless steel lightning poles in an area 1.6 kilometres by 1 kilometre, near Quemado in New Mexico. This wide and flat place surrounded by distant mountains experiences a high frequency of lightning activity. The location of “Lightning Field” meant that bright sunlight made the poles become invisible and lose their self-identity, except in the light of dawn and dusk. When a storm comes, the poles become a good medium for the lightning to connect with. The lightning performed as a “concerto” which represented in a pure form the spirit of Nature. When the seasons changed, the field changed and when the sky changed, with different weather, the field also changed. The appearance of the surroundings merged with the individual poles and melted into one phenomenon. The 400 poles create a heightened awareness of the pre-existing sense of time and space of this open environment.

We can consider De Maria’s “*Lightning Field*” in relation to Nature by considering *Ch’an* wisdom. In *Ch’an* wisdom, the salt (ego-self/400 poles) dissolves into water (Nature) and becomes invisible. In the water of space and time, there is

no more salt visible. Truly, the salt crystals have vanished into one with the entirety of space and time. We can view De Maria's piece accordingly: the 400 stainless poles become one with Nature, the desert has become a metaphysical space which contains the myriad things in the universe including the 400 stainless poles. De Maria brings us into the desert and takes us beyond the shape of the poles into emptiness. The Lightning Field provides us an opportunity to be with the universe and makes us aware of the reality behind/beyond the artwork.

Working in the cross-cultural context

Earlier in this chapter I have outlined how Eastern philosophical and aesthetic ideas became available to artists in the West and can be said to influence their work. In the modern period the planet seems to have been re-mapped through new avenues of communication and the whole world seems to have become more "globalised". National traditions, religions, and languages have been influenced by fast growing technological, travel and communication developments and these can be said to have encouraged cultural diversity. In order to appreciate the impact of cultural diversity¹³⁴, many artists including myself, have tried to identify themselves with this situation, recording different cultural experiences which they have learnt in

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- ¹³⁴ Through immigration each brought with them own nationality's traditional cultural form. They re-evaluated their identity and inherent value of their life experiences, to integrate with the local communities and situation to create a new culture.
 - Through the arts one can produce a greater understanding of different cultures. In the sharing experience of the richness and variety of cultural identity, cultural diversity is possible and interaction can bring about an exciting hybrid.
 - Through surfing on the Internet and talking with different nationalities in English, the language form and symbols created a psychological and visual impact.
 - The political organisation and global economic situation, satellite television and telecommunications.

different places, and which have brought a new aspect to their artistic practice.

The growing familiarisation with Eastern concepts enables us to discuss the work of artists from this other direction. For example, we can identify in the work of the composer John Cage, characteristics which suggest his engagement with Eastern philosophy. One of his famous compositions, 4'33" (1952) presented a silent notation, in which the music was performed for 4 minutes, 33 seconds. The back of the stage was opened to allow the sound of the forest to enter into the performance environment. The audience either walked away or whispered during the silent performance. The relation between the creation and the audience was connected and redefined during the process of the performance. The ambient surroundings were borrowed to become a part of his composition. A further example would be a collaborative performance event staged by Cage, Cunningham and other artists in the summer school at Black Mountain College in 1952. In this event, the audience was arranged to sit into four triangular spaces and there was a cross path between the seats. Cage read a text of "the relation of music to Zen Buddhism" on a step-ladder and Cunningham was chased by a dog. The performance was accompanied with other sound effects and visual projections on the wall and ceiling. An artist, David Tudor, performed amongst the audience, pouring water from one bucket into another. The performance, music, sound, audience and the environment coexisted with each other. The audience experienced a close relationship with the whole event. Cage's study of *Ch'an* Buddhism lead him to give his point of view that in his sound compositions he *"saw art not as something that consisted of a communication from the artist to an audience but rather as an activity of sounds in which the artist found a way to let the sounds be themselves. And, in being themselves, to open the minds of people who made them or listened to them to other*

*possibilities than they had previously considered.”*¹³⁵ His mode of thought could therefore be described as a notion of no boundaries, where everything is part of everything else. Earlier in this thesis this notion has been described as a central condition of Eastern thinking.

Approaching contemporary practice from this direction might provide another way of understanding it, or more importantly for the individual artist, to reveal new possibilities for it. In the contemporary situation it might provide a further opening for artists in their search for their own direction. In the following section I will consider the possibility of parallel working with Eastern philosophy and installation practice in three case studies which examine particular pieces of work by James Turrell, Richard Long and Hiroshi Teshigahara.

¹³⁵ <http://www.azstarnet.com/%7Esolo/4min33se.htm> 12/02/2003

Working with Natural Light – James Turrell

“Immensity is within ourselves. It is attached to a sort of expansion of being that life curbs and caution arrests, but which starts again when we are alone. As soon as we become motionless, we are elsewhere; we are dreaming in a world that is immense. Indeed, immensity is the movement of motionless man.”

The Poetics of Space, Gaston Bachelard¹³⁶

The choice of James Turrell has been determined not by any great direct interest by him in the philosophies of the East, but by characteristics in his work and his approach that fit with an interpretation based on Eastern ideas. A study of examples of his work reveals a unity of subjective mind and objective phenomena. His use of material, his manipulation of space, connection to the natural world and relationship with the audience interconnect in ways I have described previously in the sections about Eastern art.

Turrell was born in Los Angeles in 1943. He studied experimental psychology and mathematics at Pomona College in Claremont, California in 1965. He became interested in art and enrolled in the graduate programme at the University of California at Irvine. He started to be interested in light phenomena when he was very young, and used light as an element for his creations whilst he studied at Irvine. He created his first solo show at the Pasadena Art Museum in 1967, where he constructed a light installation *-Afrum-* in which light formed a three-dimensional

¹³⁶ P. 17, James Turrell: Sensing space, Essay by Richard Andrews, Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle, 1992

solidity in a dark space. The light installation attempted to challenge the audience's perception of space in a site.

Turrell was brought up in Quaker traditional practice in light filled, Spartan interiors and silent meeting.¹³⁷ His grandmother used to tell him "*that as you sat in Quaker silence you were to go inside to greet the light*"¹³⁸ The straightforward presentation of the sublime in Quaker belief can be said to have strongly influenced him. There is also a connection to be identified here between the phenomenon of light and the idea of light in relation to the spiritual. Perhaps his family history and background nurtured a sensibility which made him more aware than others of this link, and of spirituality as a human experience. The fascination with the phenomena of light ultimately turned into a very personal detail and it might be said, one that led Turrell towards an holistic view, where the spiritual and the phenomenological are integrated. Descriptions of Turrell's work provide further evidence of this: his work is often described in relation to personal awareness, silent contemplation, perception, and meditation. As in Turrell's own description: "I want to create an atmosphere... one that can be consciously plumbed with seeing, like the wordless thought that comes from looking into the fire."¹³⁹

Light as Material

Light is the most frustrating phenomena to contend with, hard to describe and transform into objects. In the 1960s and 1970s, a small number of artists such as Robert Irwin (b.1928), Eric Orr (1939-1998), Larry Bell (b.1939) and DeWain

¹³⁷ P. 10, James Turrell: Sensing space, Essay by Richard Andrews, Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle, 1992

¹³⁸ Greeting the Light, an interview with James Turrell by Richard Whittaker, <http://www.conversations.org/99-1-turrell.htm> 13/03/2202

¹³⁹ The art of light + space, Jan Butterfield, Abbeville Publishing, New York, 1993

Valentine (b.1936) began to work with the idea of the “no objects” and focused their attention on investigating the light and space. Their materials were light and dark, time and spaces, sunlight and shadow, sound and silence. For Turrell too, light presented itself as material. In his work it is subject and material and allows him to dissolve preconceptions and to expand the idea of what light and space can be.

He said, “*when you set out to work with the space of the sky or with light, you cannot mould and form it like clay. You have to use thought, almost like when you are working with sound. It should be really thought of as working with our perceptions, or developing our ways of seeing. My installations are in some ways analogous to the piano, which is quite a complex machine, but the sound that is produced by the piano has a life of its own and is what we hear in a piece of music. This puts us directly in touch with the sensual, it's about sensing.*”¹⁴⁰ His work then is much about interaction, perception and participation. It is also about constantly changing phenomena and Turrell’s love of flying in illuminating: he enjoys the chance to perceive the changing of light in relation to space. In many of his works his highly sophisticated ability to manipulate light within a contained environment challenges one’s perception of “nothingness” and provides us access to another level of reality.

The effect of light impacting upon an environment lies at the centre of Turrell’s work. In his large site-specific installations he investigates the connection between the internal space and the surrounding space and the outside world. He is interested to see how light can inhabit spaces, and fill them. Turrell engages with space through the medium of light. For several years Turrell has explored these central

¹⁴⁰ <http://www.crawfordartgallery.com/turrell.html> 10/01/2003

concerns through the creation of several large permanent installations in different locations. For example, the indoor and outdoor environmental installations such as the “Meeting” in P.S.1 New York, “Space that Sees” in the Israel Museum in Israel, “Skyspace” in Kielder Water and Forest Park, England and the large earth work “Roden Crater Project” in Arizona, USA.

“Meeting” in P.S.1 New York and the Keilder “Skyspace” provide a useful comparison in relation to a discussion of the relationship between installation and environment and the experience of the audience. Whilst the Kielder “Skyspace” is within the landscape of Northumberland, “Meeting” occupies a former school building within an urban environment.

Meeting at P.S.1

In a number of significant light installations sited within architectural spaces Turrell drew attention to the interaction of interior and exterior. Between 1979-1981, Turrell created a “Skyspace” known as “Meeting” at P.S.1 in Long Island City, New York.¹⁴¹ The room was designed in a square shape and furnished on all four sides with continuous comfortable wooden seating, interrupted only by the doorway. The seats were built slightly leaning backward against the wall, and the back of the seats extended above the observer’s head. There are two different light sources, one is natural light that comes through the ceiling and the other one is illumination concealed behind the top of the bench. The audience walk into the room and are able to sit on the bench to see the light for a period of time. There was nothing to observe except blank walls and the ever changing light phenomenon from the sharp-edge cut

¹⁴¹ I made a study trip to the PS1 to view the installation. The viewing time was limited during the opening hours. An advanced appointment was necessary.

sky frame in the ceiling.

Turrell described the idea behind this work: “The sky would no longer be out there, away from us, but in close contact. This plumbing of visual space through the conscious act of moving, feeling out through the eyes, became analogous to a physical journey of self as a flight of the soul through the planes.”¹⁴² I experienced “Meeting” during a visit to New York in 1999. I was able to appreciate the constantly changing sky very closely. Firstly, a bright, vivid blue occupied the whole frame. The intensity of the colour changed frequently. The soft clouds passed through the sides to the other corner of the frame or aperture. As time passed, the sky became a deeper blue and the depth became transformed into three-dimensions. The dimension between the roof and the sky disappeared, melting into a solid form. This effect was gained by having lights hidden behind the benches in the interior space that changed intensity as the outside light increased or decreased. The interior architecture and exterior space combined together to present a direct experience. Time and space became intermixed with each other to present an entity.

As I mentioned in chapter 3, *Ch'an* masters or garden designers created small court gardens in the middle of temples, or in part of urban life settings. The miniaturized landscape is surrounded by the building and connected with the sky in a limited open space. When the time and seasons changed, the garden changed. The “Meeting” was set in such a situation, located in a building. Through the limited space the audience experienced a visual connection with the ever-changing sky. “Meeting” was situated in a building that was surrounding by a busy modern urban landscape. The noise from the outside environment was cut down in the interior

¹⁴² P. 16, James Turrell: *Spirit and Light*, June 6- July 26, 1998, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, 1998

space and I felt a similar feeling, during the summer, when I visited the court gardens in temples in Kyoto. I heard only the wind and saw the clouds passing by, sky colour changing, and the interior changing with the light from the sky window.

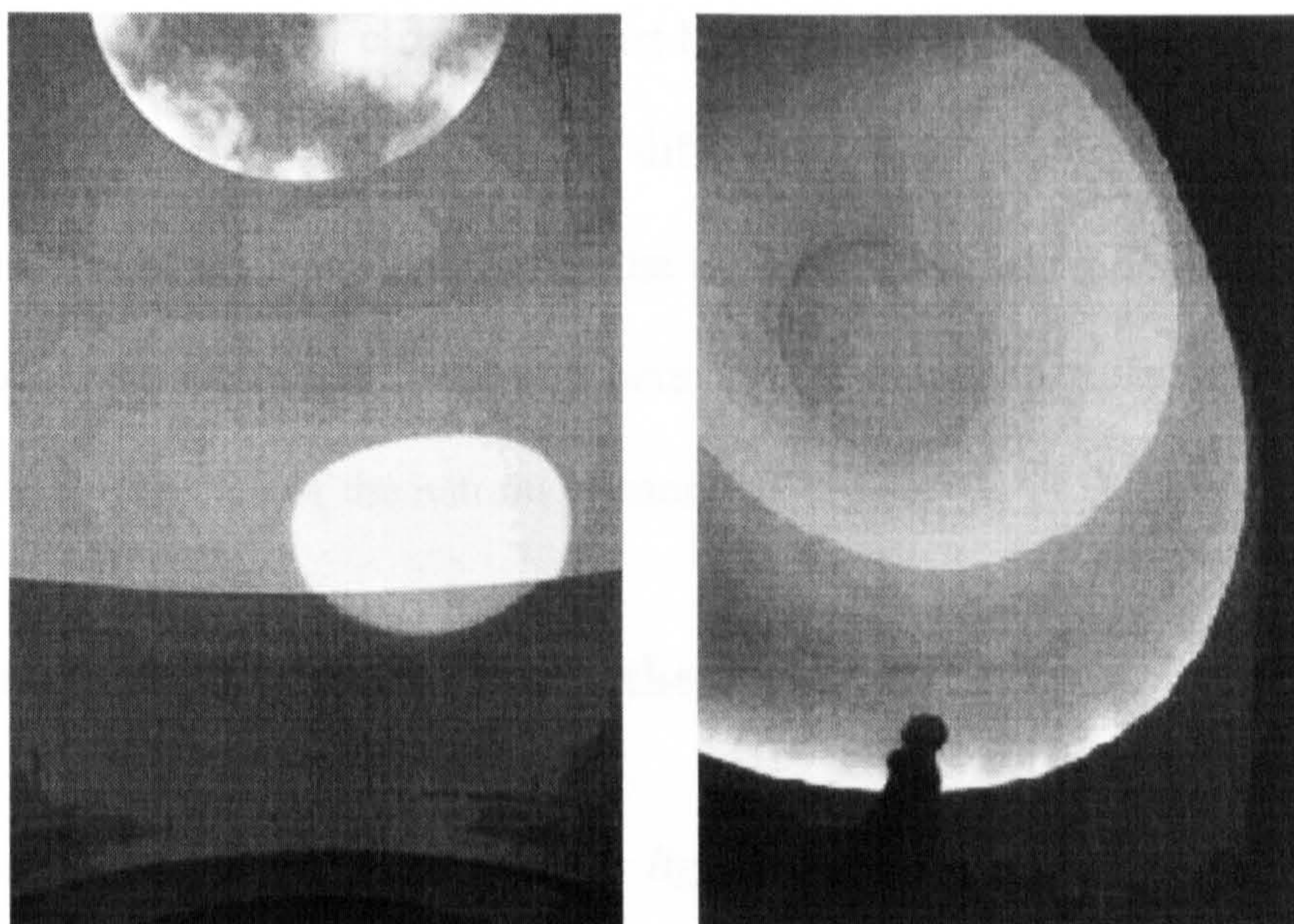
Skyspace at Cat Cairn, Kielder

Time and place is now relocated to the North East of the Atlantic. Here Turrell created a circular Skyspace at Cat Cairn, a few miles from Kielder village, in Northumberland, England. A hidden chamber was constructed from natural stones surrounded by forests, fells and lakes. A grey tunnel leads into a circular architectural space which has a roof with a three metre diameter circular observation hole open to the sky in the centre. Around the sidewall the seating area is constructed leaving several feet above the observer's head to the roof. Sources of low-energy illumination are concealed behind the top of the seats designed to change intensity as a reaction to the outside light intensity.

Skyspace is open all the time, rather like an observatory it welcomes one to enter and as an observer of cosmological phenomena. One can experience different qualities of light within the artwork depending upon weather conditions and different times of visiting. James Turrell once said: "*My desire is to set up a situation to which I can take you and let you see. It becomes your experience.*"¹⁴³ There is no focal point apart from the ever-changing phenomena. The inner place is a quiet environment and invites the audience to enter into it, to greet the light. The open circle creates a large bright area following the sun's movement. When in full darkness, the inner lighting system is activated and the yellow illumination warms

¹⁴³ P. 10, James Turrell: Sensing space, Essay by Richard Andrews, Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle, 1992

the upper wall and ceiling. The opening in the roof becomes a circle with a constantly changing intense colour. The sky colour is constantly changing at differing times of day and makes a complex image with the artificial lights of the interior design.



30. James Turrell, *Skyspace*, Kielder village, in Northumberland, England 2000

Here Turrell has prepared a place for one to perceive the Universe and create a connection to the cosmos. One can always go into the space and come out and re-enter the space again to view the change of the light and make a connection with the local environment. From my own experience of visiting this piece I found the relationship between the interior and exterior spaces particularly special:¹⁴⁴ the surrounding environment is borrowed and becomes part of the environmental construction. *Skyspace* becomes part of the vast exterior landscape, the immensity of the light filled sky enters the chamber. *Skyspace* functions as a spiritual chamber for the observer to visit the poetic landscape of the phenomena of light.

It can be argued the *Skyspace* works with principles similar to those of teahouse

¹⁴⁴ Kielder Skyspace opened to the public in the year 2000. I made a field study trip to the Skyspace on the 7th of June, 2001

design and function in a traditional Chinese garden or Japanese *Ch'an* garden. They too provide a place to link the actions of the observer with the constantly changing phenomena of the earth and the galaxies. The teahouse is normally surrounded by landscape scenery or landscape garden settings. The owner and guests are able to enjoy or view the scenery changing whilst having their tea. The teahouse cooperates with the surrounding atmosphere. In different weather conditions the teahouse becomes a part of the landscape. When the sky is dark the lake mirrors the light from the teahouse, the moon and the atmosphere. The teahouse provides a chance for one to perceive the change of the natural phenomena.

Experience the Light and Sense the Space

Turrell once said *“in working with light, what is really important to me is to create an experience of wordless thought.”*¹⁴⁵ “Seeing” becomes here a form of understanding as well as experiencing. In his works Turrell accommodates the viewer in a situation where they cannot avoid thinking about what a person’s sense of light is. Why is it? There is no surface for the viewer to project their perceptions onto, there is no form, no image, only constantly changing light and its effect upon the space and optically in the viewer’s vision. In a sense the entirety is an emptiness: the viewer captures nothing through physical contact but through attuned visual engagement. They are engaged on another level. In Turrell’s own words: *I have an interest in the invisible light, the light perceptible only in the mind. A light which seems to be undimmed by entering of the senses. I wanted to address the light that we see in dreams and make spaces that seem to come from those dreams and which are familiar to those who inhabit those places. Light has a regular power for me.*

¹⁴⁵ P. 145, James Turrell. *Kijkduin*, James Turrell, Stroom the Hague Centre for Visual Arts. Hague, 1996

*What takes place in viewing a space is wordless thought. It's not as though it's thinking and without intelligence; it's that it has a different return than words.*¹⁴⁶ It is just no more than a simple direct perception – the viewer can allow the light to flow freely into their consciousness.

Eastern philosophy holds the same idea. There is no separation between Man and Heaven. The form is therefore emptiness, and emptiness is therefore the form. As Chuang Tzu discussed in *“The Making all Things Equal”*: *“Heaven and Earth were born at the same time I was, and the ten thousand things are one with me.”*¹⁴⁷ In Turrell's work, when the sky has borrowed from the outside (the exterior) and is gathered with the interior (the seating bench, the illumination) the two aspects work together and merge into one. Light is not somewhere in the distance but close, where one can participate in it, become part of it.

Viewing the space is not a literal study in sensing the space and it can be argued that there are no words that can fully describe the meaning of the creation. So too *Ch'an* emphasises wisdom beyond phenomena and words. As the Diamond Sutra reads: *“One should activate the mind without dwelling on anything.”*¹⁴⁸ And again, *“All appearances are illusory; if you see that appearances are not characteristics' then you see the realized One.”*¹⁴⁹ There is something one is unable to verbalise, but

¹⁴⁶ P. 17. James Turrell: Sensing space, Essay by Richard Andrews, Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle, 1992

¹⁴⁷ P. 43. Chapter 2, the complete work of Chuang Tzu, translated by Burton Watson. New York, Columbia University Press, 1968

¹⁴⁸ P. 108. “Adorning a Pure Land”, The Sutra of Hui-Neng, Grand Master of Zen, with Hui-Neng's Commentary on the Diamond Sutra, Translated by Thomas Cleary, Shambhla Publications, Inc., Boston, 1998

Therefore, Subhuti, Bodhisattva Mahasattvas should generate a pure mind thus: they should not activate the mind dwelling on form; they should not activate the mind dwelling on sound, scent, flavour, feeling, or phenomena. They should activate the mind without dwelling on anything.

¹⁴⁹ P. 98, “The Rarity of True Faith”, The Sutra of Hui-Neng, Grand Master of Zen, with Hui-Neng's Commentary on the Diamond Sutra, Translated by Thomas Cleary, Shambhla Publications, Inc., Boston, 1998

which can only be sensed psychologically.

Turrell's work can be said to refer to the light effect in poetic atmospheric works of art such as the landscape paintings of J. M. W. Turner (1775-1851), Albert Bierstadt (1830-1902), Ansel Adams (1902-1984), and the spiritual perception of light in the minimalist paintings of Agnes Martin (b.1912) and those of Barnett Newman (1905-1970) and Mark Rothko (1903-1970). All those painters searched for the sublime light within painting which had a reference to landscape. When we look at Turner's painting "Norham Castle, Sunrise" (1845) there is a quality of changing light which specifies the time of day. Similarly Turrell's "Skyspace" influences the viewer's perception of light, and relates it to the particularities of time and place. We might also be able to see a similar influence in the paintings of Mark Rothko. In certain Rothko paintings, such as "Red on Maroon" one of the mural scale paintings from the "Rothko Room" in Tate Modern, it is as though the paintings reflect light or are a source of light themselves, "*The light affects physically like a ray of sunlight streaming between the trees.*"¹⁵⁰ The spiritual awareness and essential light shining from the painting play on the viewer's emotion and idea of light and colour. Turrell's preoccupation with concepts of light and colour as one part of each other, their spatial and spiritual dimension can also be in Rothko's paintings. Returning to the Rothko room at Tate modern we can see parallels with Turrell in terms of audience participation: the paintings here create an atmosphere of quietness, clam and stillness; they invite the audience to become part of that quiet, they encourage meditation. So too, Turrell involves the audience in

The Buddha said to Subhuti, "All appearances are illusory: if you see that appearances are not characteristics' then you see the realized One." The Realized One wants to reveal the reality body, so he says all appearances are illusory. If you see that all appearances are illusory and unreal, then you see the formless truth of the Realized One.

¹⁵⁰ Occluded Front, James Turrell, edited by Julia Brown, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 1985

such a way, but we might say it is a fuller spatial engagement. With Rothko the paintings hang on the wall, with Turrell the audience are truly surrounded.

Turrell's pure and simple light installations also express a relation with time. The square aperture of the New York installation and the circle sky window of Kielder provide a natural "microscope" for an audience to perceive the constantly changing environment. Change is linked to time. The viewer/participant becomes part of that experience of time and space, and for the viewer past history and present time merge together. As Turrell's described, "*I want to be involved with here and now.*"¹⁵¹ The immediate here and now are much more precise and profound when one is directly engaged in experiential appreciation of space, light and change. Referring back to *Ch'an*, this philosophy emphasises that the only way to see the "real" reality is to have a pure "experience". Turrell's light installation provides an opportunity to realise such an immediate experience, for one to see the "real" reality.

To summarise, we can see in key works by Turrell that there is no division between art and nature. Inside and outside, sky and earth, nature and culture, ancient and future are merged into each other. The audience too becomes part of it. This fits with the principle characteristics of Eastern philosophy described earlier in this thesis. Eastern wisdom informs us "ten thousand things and I are one".

¹⁵¹ James Turrell, Sala de exposiciones de la Fundacion la Caixa, Madrid, 12 November 1992- 10 January, 1993

Walking with Nature – Richard Long

“Always think of the universe as one living organism, with a single substance and a single soul; and observe how all things are submitted to the single perceptivity of this one whole, all are moved by its single impulse, and all play their part in the causation of every event that happens. Remark the intricacy of the skein, the complexity of the web.”

Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*¹⁵²

The work of the contemporary British artist Richard Long (b.1945) provides another useful point of reference in relation to the principle themes of this thesis. The works of Long most commonly involve physical movement of the body through time and space, and are concerned with the motion and impermanence of all phenomena. Long will typically carry out a piece of work in the form of a walk across a landscape, he might leave traces of his walk in the form of a worn track, or by moving natural objects such as stones or sticks into shapes such as circles which are then left to be re-absorbed into the environment. Such walks are usually documented in text and/or photographic material which might be presented within a gallery setting. Sometimes too he will remove materials such as stones from the land and bring it into the interior space of the gallery.

Long was born in 1945. He studied art at the West of England College of Art in Bristol and St. Martin's School of Art in London in the 1960s. Because of Richard Long's approach of Nature being “active” in the 1960s he is often associated with

¹⁵² P. 9, Richard Long, *A moving world*, Tate St. Ives, Exhibition at Tate St. Ives, England, 2002

the American environmental artists. Artists such as Robert Smithson, Michael Heizer and Walter de Maria, mentioned previously, who were turning their creative thoughts toward the American west to create large-scale environmental assemblage projects. However, Richard Long, along with Hamish Fulton (b.1946), though interested in developing their work in an outdoor environment by arranging nature, were distinctively different in approach to the Americans. Long focussed more upon self-experience and chose to intervene in the landscape usually on a smaller scale and often in transient ways. The circles, lines and marks Long leaves on the ground are basically established upon the scale of the human body and his own physical capabilities. Long described his art as “*a portrait of myself in the world, my own personal journey through it and the materials that I find along the way.*”¹⁵³ Long has also described his art as “*an expression of both the intellect and the body, they are absolutely complementary... It is necessary for me... to do it myself, because my work is in my own footsteps, it is only what I can do.*”¹⁵⁴ He picks up stones on the mountains as large as he can physically handle and then creates large stone circles or lines. Even in his interior works, such as “*Waterfall line*” (Tate Modern, 2000), the marks are his own handprints made from mud he has collected. *Ch’an* emphasises that one has to go and experience things for oneself and this fits well with Long and his work: the journey for him is a very private, quiet and active event, his work is his own “footprints and experience”.

Over his years of artistic practice, to directly, immediately and practically communicate with nature, is what Long has been concerned with. As Long’s “practice” is concerned with leaving his mark on nature he uses walking as the most

¹⁵³ P. 251, Richard Long, *Working in Circles*, An interview with Richard Long by Richard Cork, Thames and Hudson, London, 1991

¹⁵⁴ P. 14, Richard Long, *Circles Cycles Mud Stones*, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, 1996

simple medium to achieve this. His concentration, observation and awareness within the continuum of the walk allow opportunities to explore the relationships between time, distance, geography and measurement, to become alert to the different physical, psychological and perceptual forces present at different times in different localities. Walking itself forms a simplistic activity, which nonetheless contains spiritual values similar to meditation training and its significance has been identified by those such as Japanese poets, Chinese philosophers and even English Romantics. Through the medium of his body he is connected to real space and time within a purely contemporary situation and so receives inspiration and enlightenment from his walking within the “whole” environment. To study Long’s work is to study the Unity of the relationship between Man and Nature: an on-going walking journey of his whole spiritual existence across five continents. This journey proceeded from the Sahara Desert to the Rio Grande; from the coast of France to the edge of the Mississippi; from Dartmoor in Devon to the top of Honshu in Japan. Wherever he goes he leaves a line for us to trace an impermanent journey.



31. Richard Long, *A Line made by Walking*, England, 1967

When Long walks, time is present in his footsteps passing through the grass,

riverbeds or fields. After he has left the locale the footpath will become grass again, or be covered by water, return back to its original form and leave little or no trace of his presence. These “sculptures” made out of Long’s walking journey vanished into Nature’s essential processes. Long creates works by disturbing material from its existing situation and lending it a focus within the environment, he creates a different physical existence for it before allowing it to return gradually back to its origin. Everything is therefore constantly changing in the *Ch’an* sense. The cycle of action and consequence is a continuing process gradually fading towards infinity. Long’s personal experience and involvement with constantly changing daily environmental patterns is central to his artwork. The action of walking and creating forms in the outdoors denotes an inseparable relationship with the surroundings, i.e. to nature. Just as a traditional Chinese landscape painter might merge himself/herself into landscape to expand his/her inspiration so too Long’s involvement and creation are integrated with each other and with the land. The line in “*A Line made by Walking*” (1967) was created by repeatedly walking in single file until the grass was flattened down to present a line. The line carried his invisible footprints in tracing his energy and presence on the land. This path activates the entire environment and becomes one with the entire surroundings, just as an ink stroke in Chinese painting or a stone in the *Ch’an* garden of Ryoanji. These ink strokes are able to represent different forms, and activate the time of conception and the doctrine of life. Likewise, a stone balances the spatial relationship with the other stones and their relationship to the entire garden. One sees the individual as part of the entirety (as in human relationships). The audience perceives the whole of totality when seeing the ink strokes or stones representing an environment. Long has described his work as providing, “*a state of union between man and man, man and nature.*”¹⁵⁵ He is

¹⁵⁵ P. 28, *The Critical Eye/I*: Quoted in “Richard Long”. Yale Centre for British Art, New Haven.

within and outside the space.

Long's walks in many different locations, – (in Japan, France, South Africa...) and different terrains such as river bank, moor and desert – provide different personal experiences of nature. Just as every location is different, the sculpture or work transmits a different message from one to another. As with other environmental artists there is a unique relationship with the land. Once artists are attached to a site, or in Long's case a journey across a space, the environment influences their creation and concepts. As a Chinese *Ch'an* aesthetic once described "*The phenomenon arose from mind stimulation; the stimulation provided by the external phenomenon*". Hence, the artwork is created as part of the artist's involvement with the environment. It presented a new state of *yi jing* or unity between the environment, the artist's activity and what he creates.

Natural Materials and Forms

The entire environment and the elements of nature are the materials of his work. Long makes sculpture from any pre-existing material whilst crossing the land. It could be argued that Long in his transporting and rearranging of stones, wood, dust, clay and water is working rather like a Chinese landscape garden designer or *Ch'an* garden master who selects natural elements such as rocks, groves, plants, gravel or water to create a poetic and sculptural environment. The difference between the two being that the site is no longer a garden but an open field or stretch of landscape. Whatever is locally available is used by Long to make his sculpture pieces. For example, in a work such as "*A circle in Alaska*", 1977, he brings driftwood from the surroundings and constructs these into a circle, or, "*A 6 Day Walk in the Atlas*"

Connecticut, 1984.

Mountains”, (described as “throwing stones into a line”) Morocco, 1979, Long repeatedly threw stones into a line upon snow while he walked along a ridge of a mountain side.

There is an engagement to nature also in the forms he creates. The elements he uses have been transposed into a different vocabulary of shapes such as a line, a circle, a square, a spiral or a cross. These are significant forms with reference to readings and meanings of Nature and the concept of the Universal in different cultures and traditions. In Chinese thinking, the substance of the universal meaning is that the square represents the four corners of Earth, the circle represents the infinity of Heaven. Further, this primitive belief of a circular Heaven and square Earth manipulates the life system of ten thousand things and presents symbolically, the entire Universe. It can be said that Long’s use of these shapes/symbols influence artistic presentation and contribute towards a great aesthetic perception of the state of Infinity. With these universal shapes/symbols Long also finds an aesthetic form which can carry cosmic meaning, but with a physical relationship to the reality of his personal journeys. Travelling through the space of square and circle, his work expresses the beauty of a unity and harmony of “complexity and reality”.¹⁵⁶

Direct Experience – Long and the Audience

Long’s works are mostly presented to a public audience within a gallery context in the form of a mixture of material, such as photographs, maps and text.

Long has developed a particular form of presenting the evidence of his walks within a gallery context which show the evidence of his self-experience in the

¹⁵⁶ P. 104. Richard Long, *Working in Circles*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1991.

landscape. He also sometimes brings natural materials into the gallery environment. This will typically include texts of his journey and the time and distance of his travelling. Big and bold characters of the texts are displayed in different colours (mainly red, orange and black) directly on the gallery walls, and they represent a description of his trip in a quiet way with strong contrast. A map marked with a line to indicate his route through the landscape might also be included. Natural materials such stone, slate, driftwood and mud might be brought from different locations into the gallery and be constructed or manipulated into different circular or ring shapes. He also might apply mud or clay onto the gallery walls using quick hand movements letting the mud/clay drip down due to gravitational force.

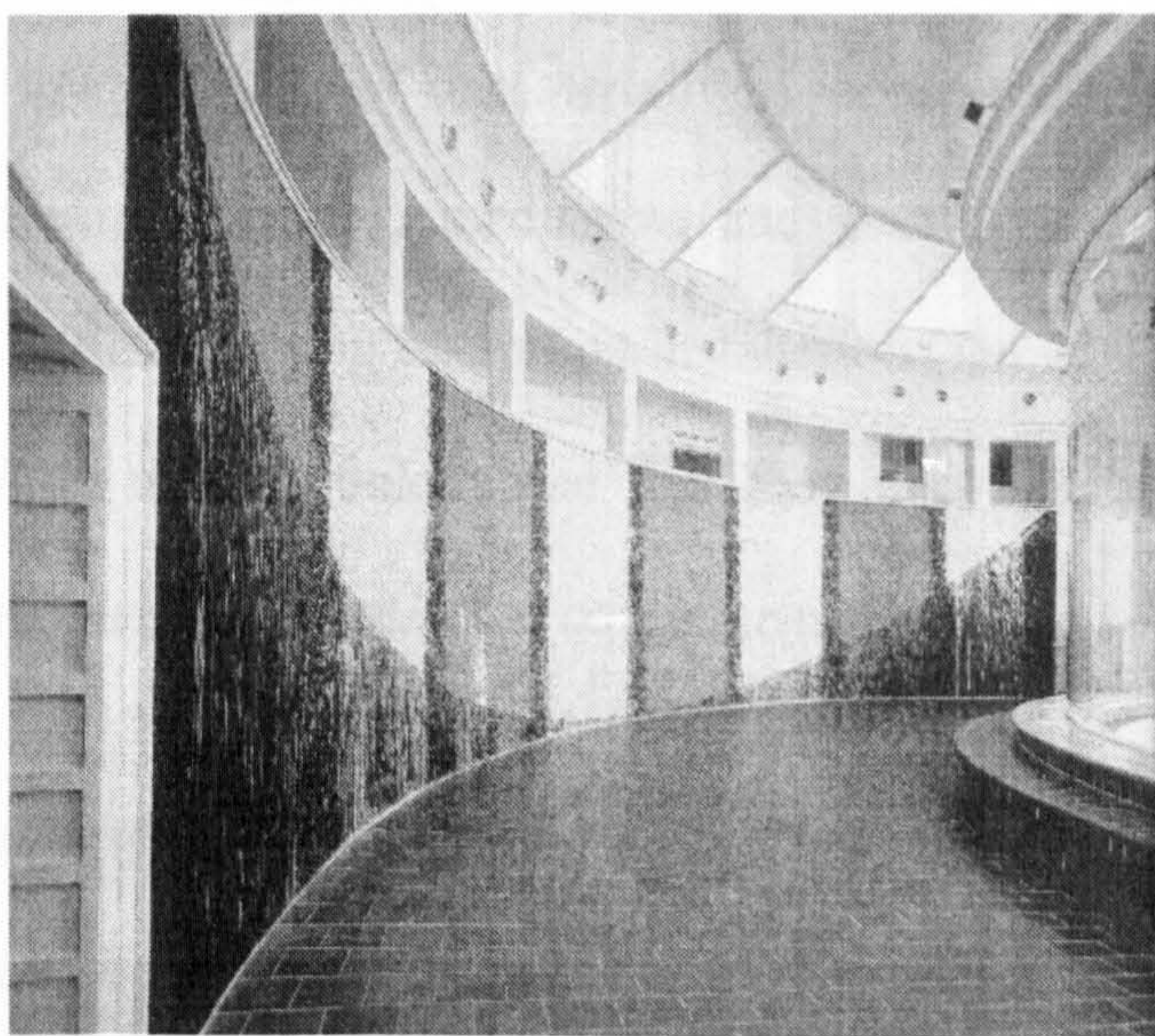
What does this material describe or explain to us? How is the audience's engagement with this material affected by the way in which it is presented?

Firstly, the material provides documentary evidence of Long's travel in terms of time and space – the particular place, time of day and weather. Such documents clearly present the precise measurement of time, distance and place. It also shows his activity in those places: what he does, how he does it, the materials he has worked with, how he has affected the land and what he leaves behind.

Sometimes Long creates new sculptural forms inside the gallery using material brought from the sites and locations he has visited. For example, as mentioned above, he might bring stones indoors to create a floor based sculpture, or paint mud on the gallery wall. What is important to note is that Long's indoor pieces are worked on in the same spirit as the outdoor sculptures: when Long works in a gallery space, the space is also working with him. Space and the artist echo together as in the relation of *yin* and *yang*; positive and negative forces integrating with each

other to create unity.

In “*Porthmeor Arc and Earth*”¹⁵⁷ in the Tate Gallery St. Ives, England, 2002, we can see this process of artist and space coming together. He applied River Avon Mud and Cornish China Clay to the curved wall in the gallery to produce an inverted arch with a two colour stripe pattern (the natural colour of mud and clay). The inverted wall prints echo with the ceiling and architectural space. The simple action of repeatedly applying clay and mud to the wall using his bare hands gives us a sense of a meditative activity. The quality of the earthy material activates the space and records the time and speed of Long’s hands touching the surface of the walls. The period of time of his engagement is implicit in the forms that are left in the space. The relationship of artist, artwork and space has changed over time as the artist engages with the space. The relationship to nature is interesting here too – the scale of nature has been brought into an architectural space based on the human scale. The materials used are from the landscape but have travelled. They have been transported inside.



32. Richard Long, *Porthmeor Arc and Earth*, Tate Gallery, St. Ives, England, 2002

¹⁵⁷ Richard Long, A moving world, Tate St. Ives, Exhibition at Tate St. Ives, England, 2002

When one of his exhibitions is finished the walls will undergo another rearrangement. The space will return to its original state prepared for the next creation. There is no boundary between time and space in his work and we can say that the past, present and future cross together. He leaves his presence in time within the display of the wall handprints, the marks on the site or floor based sculptures. The present time and the experience of the past are integrated together, the impermanence of materials and forms project into the future.

The way in which the material is arranged by Long in the Gallery is in keeping with the way Long operates in the landscape. The material is presented and arranged in a simple form and creates a quiet environment, one of calm and self-awareness. Combinations of material are used, and an event is not only recorded but is re-presented in an appropriate way. These documents allow the audience to enter into and perceive the presentation of nature as Long's experience, but this engagement becomes part of their own experience. Though simple on one level they are also sophisticated as they enable the audience to engage almost in a "first hand" way with Long's interpretation of immateriality. I would use words such as quiet, calm, serene, natural, integrated, meditative and poetic to describe the typical characteristics of a Richard Long exhibition/installation. These are qualities that are also found in *Ch'an* and I would argue that they allow the possibility for the audience to find another level of mind or consciousness.

Yi jing can be present in two different ways. Firstly, from Long's point of view his *yi* is transformed by materials and creates a phenomenon. Secondly, the viewer perceives the artwork with their *yi* and interprets the *yi* of Long through the medium of texts, photographs, mud handprints and stone sculptures. This is understood as a

direct transmission of *yi* from the essential nature of Long to the essential nature of the viewer. The *yi jing* resonates inside the mind of the receptive observer. Although the work of Long is valid in its own right it can be thought of as completed by the reception and understanding of the observer. Therefore the audience who experienced Long's sculpture might never know what he was thinking when he was walking in open land or daubing a wall with muddy clay, but can directly read the work, interpret it as part of their own experience. Just like *Ch'an*, it is through direct "self-experience" of this phenomenal world that one understands the unity of self and nature.

Summary

This self-experience is related to the context of *Ch'an* and Long's direct experience of the natural world could be said to be close to that often encountered by enlightened Eastern masters. The personal mind and the universe become united in harmony. Mind merges with the landscape and the creation becomes a reflection of self-expression. "To become a bamboo in the field and to become a stone in the land" as explained in *Ch'an* philosophy. There is no apprehension. Long is a part of nature therefore nature is inside him, as it is in everything. Each one of us is a part of the other, part of the whole. As he said "*I might be thinking of nothing, sort of absent-minded....It's like living in the movement.*"¹⁵⁸ Long's direct and dynamic creational acts have a relevance to *Ch'an* being within the direct experience of the material world but, detached from any material phenomena. The work he does is just a simple act – walking with instinct – a physical involvement with the landscape moving his audience into the centre of Nature.

¹⁵⁸ P. 76, Richard Long, *Working in Circles*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1991

Dialogue from the Cross-cultural Context – Hiroshi Teshigahara

The previous two sections of my thesis have taken a view from the perspective of the work of James Turrell and Richard Long. The study of those two artists, one from the USA and one from the U.K., have shown that approaching some installation and environmental art using aspects of Eastern philosophy is instructive and emphasises particular important characteristics. Artist, artwork, nature, space, materials and audience have been shown to be part of an holistic unity. As such we can see their link to the ideas of *Yi Jing* and *Ch'an*. As an artist who was born and trained in the East and who has come to the West and currently practises here I am interested to take a similar look at an artist who has shared a situation comparable with my own. The Japanese artist Hiroshi Teshigahara (1927-2001) who worked in film, flower arrangement and installation was born in Japan but much of his work can be said to be made in a contemporary Western context. The following section is not intended as comprehensive account of Teshigahara and his entire artistic practice but I hope to identify issue that I can refer back to my own practice and this thesis.

In contemporary culture there is a dense web which contains several elements of cultural, social, economic, and psychological factors which contributes to the range of interpretation. In this contemporary situation, we are also all living on a global cultural stage in which the various kinds of distance (cultural, political, economic, travel) between different countries seem to have been “shortened”. Information technology is physically and physiologically influencing our philosophy and perception. This has created a huge impact upon the language and psychology of cross-cultural dialogue. Different cultures share the potential that traditional essential wisdom or concepts have to re-evaluate their culture or their social or

economic situation. This situation works in parallel with artistic activities. Artists working today might be said to be expanding the range of imaginative response and conceptual understanding in re-evaluating the cultural environment.

This different cultural impact was not just appearing in the development of Western artists in the twentieth century but also influenced Eastern artists to re-evaluate their concepts and interpret their inspiration with new concepts.

The Influence of Cultural Backgrounds

Teshigahara is a good example in relation to this situation: he was aware of both Western modern art and traditional Japanese art and, for example, was known for his *Ch'an* practice as well as for his use of light and the environment in his bamboo installations. The “self-courage” of artistic practice Teshigahara developed became his own personal interpretation of the cultural impact between East and West. He could be considered a cross-cultural artist.

Teshigahara was brought up in very traditional Japanese family surroundings and studied painting at the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, graduated at 1950. The traditional culture in particular, influenced by the artistic practices of *Ch'an* Buddhism and the strong image of Japanese culture, helped him to create a strong personal character in his practice. Before Teshigahara went to any art school, he received a lot of information by observing the reproductions from his father's art books and catalogues of collections of Western artistic currents such as Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Dadaism, and Cubism, and also traditional Japanese arts.¹⁵⁹ This gave him a great exposure to knowledge of Western modern

¹⁵⁹ P. 40, *The Delicate Thread: Teshigahara's life in art*. Dore Ashton, Kodansha International, Tokyo,

art and his own tradition. After the Second World War, the information exchange between East and West became faster than before. Everything from the West became popular, including Western culture and art. Teshigahara would have been affected by this environment in which awareness of Western information and culture expanded rapidly. In 1951, an exhibition of Henri Matisse has held in the Ohara Museum of Art. This is the oldest museum featuring Western art in Japan, located in Kurashiki City, Okayama Prefecture. In the same year an exhibition including American artists such as Bradley Walker Tomlin, Ad Reinhardt, Jackson Pollock, Mark Tobey, Mark Rothko and Theodoros Stamos, as well as international artists such as Rene Magritte, Jean Dubuffet, Wifredo Lam and Yve Tanguy was held in Japan. Alongside these exhibitions documents about artistic currents developing in Europe and USA were carefully displayed for visitors. This discovery of first hand information of Western art inspired young Japanese artists to create new forms in their practice. On the other hand, the inheritance of traditional Japanese artistic practices and the influence of his father, Sofu Teshigahara, (1900-1979) whose artistic practices include organic sculptures of bronze and flower arrangements which became known as the Sogetsu¹⁶⁰ School. *Ch'an* philosophy also became a strong resource to support him to create his specific concept and creations.

The Japanese-American artist Isamu Noguchi (1904-1988) who was a friend of Sofu, well known both in the East and West, provides an example of an influential artist who studied traditional forms. Around 1952 Noguchi spent months working with Japanese potter Rosanjin Kitaoji (1883-1959) using clay to create ceramic sculptures in kita Kamahura, for example, "Sunflower", a single circle of clay with

New York, 1997

¹⁶⁰ Sogetsu means grass and moon. Sofu Teshigahara is the founder of the Sogetsu School and it is one of three major flower arranging schools in Japan.

five petal shapes. Noguchi had an exhibition in Kanazawa Prefectural Museum of Modern Art in 1952. In his own work Noguchi's used local materials such as clay and bamboo. It could be argued that this might have surprised young Japanese artists of the time such as Yagi Kazuo, Yamada Hikaru and Suzuki Osamu¹⁶¹. Noguchi would have provided a role model of an artist who looked at sophisticated art forms such as the Noh performance¹⁶², ceramics, tea ceremony, and *Ch'an* garden design. He also thought that the way masters utilised their chosen materials could offer them a cultivated foundation towards developing a unique contemporary practice. Many young Japanese artists of the period resisted such ideas of referring back or making use of tradition and wished to base their practice and study solely on Western art. For Teshigahara the idea of looking into tradition was central to his artistic development. His natural absorption of Japanese traditional aesthetics provided a foundation for his artistic development.

Teshigahara would have been influenced by Noguchi, his father's friend, around the early 1950's, particularly during Noguchi's extended visit to Japan in 1951-1952. Teshigahara studied and linked together the Japanese *Ch'an* garden, tea ceremony and tea huts, being specifically interested in Sen no Rikyu (1552-1591) who was a master of Sado (tea ceremony)¹⁶³, and also an artist who Noguchi had studied. Teshigahara even made a film (1989) about Rikyu's fascinating life. The tea ceremony is associated with different cultural aspects: as Teshigahara stated "people of different occupations and social classes gather to share the singular opportunity in

¹⁶¹ who had formed the avant-garde group Sodeisha (Crawling Through Mud Society) in 1948. http://www.janm.org/about/press/10_29/10/2004

¹⁶² A traditional Japanese art form that contains dance, song and drama and has a 700 year tradition.

¹⁶³ who founded a simple and humble art form style of tea ceremony called *wabi cha*, which influenced Japanese culture through the periods of Muromachi (1338-1568) and Momoyama (1568-1600). http://www.city.sakai.osaka.jp/arekore/person/person1_e.html 24/10/2004

one meeting, with the space and time organized only through the tea ceremony.”¹⁶⁴

A tea ceremony can be described as a stage performance. One of his other major passions, the traditional Japanese *Ch'an* garden contains various materials such as stones, rocks and trees which are carefully arranged and merged with the local surroundings and shaped by them all into one unique environment. The sound of bamboos “clapping” in the air and the reflections on the water are also consciously employed to be contained in the totality of the garden design. When we look at Teshigahara’s installation work we will see a clear connection with these characteristics. Teshigahara also studied *Ch'an*-inspired tea huts from which one can look out upon the surrounding environment. The tea ceremony creates a strong link between the artist, the audience and the space. These rich cultural traditions and the manipulation of time and space in traditional Japanese art were the most authentic sources for Teshigahara.

In terms of the Western influence on artist such as Teshigahara, and the possibilities for Eastern/Western cultural hybrids we can refer to the example of the American artist and composer John Cage. Frequent cultural exchanges between New York, Western Europe and Tokyo after the Second World War and during the 1950s, resulted in John Cage becoming one of the important figures in the bridge between the East and West. Cage himself combined aspects of Eastern and Western cultural and philosophical approaches and took *Ch'an* inspired music and performance from the West to Japan. For example, in October 1962 at Ueno in Japan, Cage was assisted by other artists such as Yoko Ono, who performed had performed at Sogetsu¹⁶⁵ on May 24th 1962, and David Tudor to perform repeated movements

¹⁶⁴ P. 168, *The Delicate Thread: Teshigahara's life in art*, Dore Ashton, Tokyo. New York, Kodansha International, 1997

¹⁶⁵ The Sogetsu theatre was founded by Teshigahara’s father Sofu. A venue renowned for avant-garde

towards a piano, to lie on the piano touching the piano or hitting the keys repeatedly to make a continuous sound effect. The concept of this piece with its simplistic slow movement was *Ch'an* inspired and introduced forms of avant-garde performance to an audience were unfamiliar with them. The impact of such events inspired Japanese artists to rethink again their own roots. Both Cage and Noguchi influenced young Japanese artists to “*look at old things and new things as equal*”.¹⁶⁶ This gave Teshigahara a greater impression of how the Westerner views his culture, and inspired him to redefine the value of his own tradition in his art.

We can say then that Teshigahara became aware of both Eastern and Western culture, of tradition and the contemporary. He explored, questioned and opened his curiosity to the value of different cultures on both sides of the world. The exchanged information from Western art provided him various concepts of modern art including Surrealism, Neo-Dada, the avant-garde and performance amongst others. I would argue that this cultural awareness provided him with the strength and conceptual resource to explore cross-cultural forms. He was able to develop into a visual artist capable of bringing together into a cohesive whole the traditional and the contemporary in terms of aesthetics, concepts, materials and form.

Bamboo as Material

*“Bamboo – flexible, resilient, long-lasting, useful – has always served as an open-ended metaphor.”*¹⁶⁷

The awareness of the importance of Japanese traditions inspired Teshigahara to

performance.

¹⁶⁶ P. 104, *The Delicate Thread: Teshigahara's life in art*, Dore Ashton, Tokyo, New York, Kodansha International, 1997

¹⁶⁷ P. 189, *Art in America*, Vol.78, September, 1990

utilise various different materials and mediums such as clay, flowers, calligraphy, and bamboo to create his artistic works and bring tradition into play with the “modern”. This situation might be said to be similar to those scholars in the present time who are still seeking the original spiritual thoughts from masters and philosophers who enlightened ancient history.

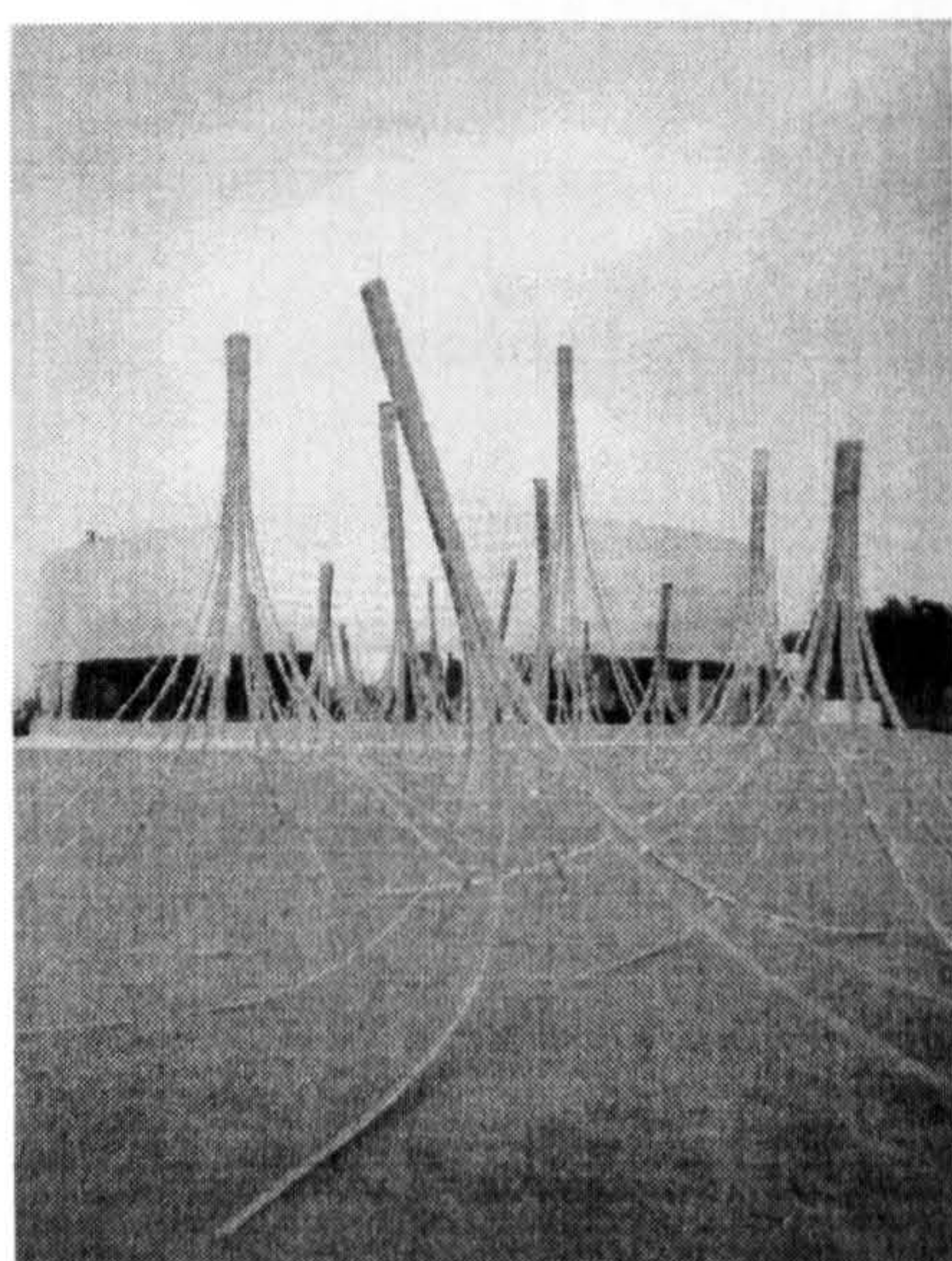
The example of Teshigahara’s use of bamboo is particularly relevant to the discussion. As stated above bamboo had a metaphorical value as well as physical properties that he could make use of. Bamboo for him was a plant with a striking visual and emotional impact with varied uses. Around the early 1980s, he became aware of the versatility of bamboo whilst creating flower arrangements. In Dore Ashton’s biography of Teshigahara he writes of the artist’s description of bamboo as a “substance that stimulated his imagination and offered the possibilities of expansion that he required”¹⁶⁸. Bamboo is a material that is able to bend itself without any additional twisting. Bamboo also gives a strong impression of Oriental culture, which often encapsulates the organic gesture of nature and also provides us information about the natural process.

In 1982 Teshigahara created his first outdoor bamboo installation with a combination of concepts from calligraphy and *Ikebana* flower arrangements¹⁶⁹ interpreting these into a new form. He used split bamboo to form the shape of the Chinese character for “人 Person”, and installed it outside the Shiseido Art House in

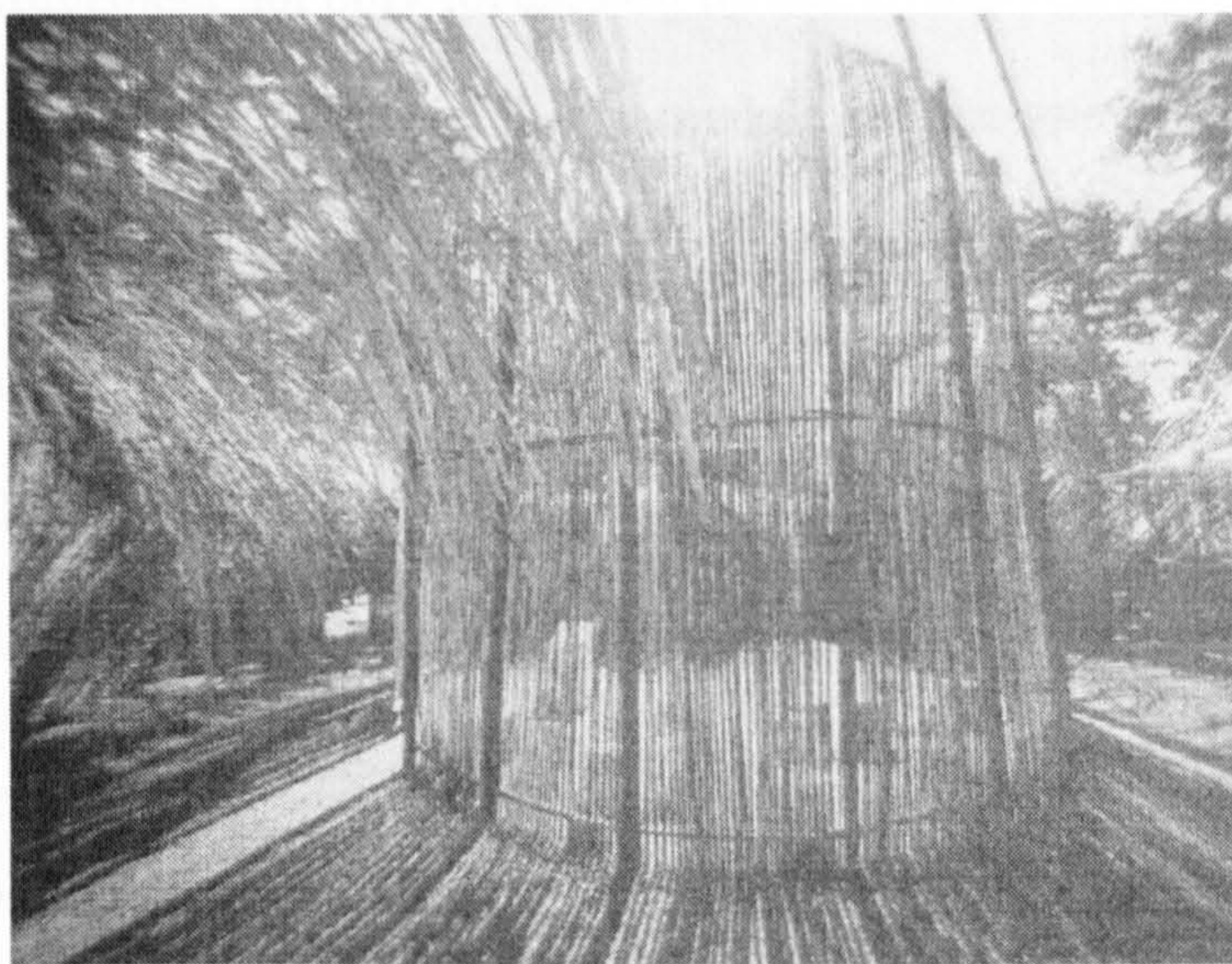
¹⁶⁸ P. 146. *The Delicate Thread: Teshigahara's life in art*, Dore Ashton, Kodansha International, Tokyo, New York, 1997

¹⁶⁹ An art of sculptural flower arrangement, a major concept being to use three branches to represent Heaven, Earth and Man. The development of this flower arrangement goes back to the sixth century, and the oldest Ikebana school was founded by a Buddhist priest Ikenobo Senkei in the fifteenth century.

Tokyo. Later, he also created a similar bamboo installation¹⁷⁰ in which the linear arcs of bamboo suggested willows bending and weeping over a pond outside the open air theatre in Togamura, Japan. The move into installation was a very important step in his artistic development. Moving out from the spatial management of a vase in an indoor space to the unlimited outdoor environment was an essential issue for Teshigahara. The sense of spatiality has changed and, as has been described in Richard Long's work, the external environment borrowed to become part of his artwork. This spatial arrangement would not be the same as that indoors but rather opens to the public and to Nature. He therefore brought his artistic practice under the umbrella term of "environmental" or "installation" practice.



33. Hiroshi Teshigahara, *Shiseido* Art House, Kakegawa-Shi, Shizuoka Prefecture. 1982.



34. Hiroshi Teshigahara, *Dean Teahouse*, Numazu, 1992

Teshigahara's bamboo installation were presented typically in a number of different forms such as huge bamboo tunnels in a gallery or open space, a bamboo tea hut, a huge mound of bamboo lying just flat on an open field, triangular bamboo tunnels, stripping open the end of the bamboo and then the strip bent naturally and presented as a bamboo flower, and so on. These different forms of presentations

¹⁷⁰ P. 148, *The Delicate Thread: Teshigahara's life in art*, Dore Ashton, Kodansha International, Tokyo, New York, 1997. The title of this installation is not given.

were open to the public to enter into, or walk into, to experience the “man-made” environment. For example, in 1992 in Numazu, Japan Teshigahara combined the concept of tea ceremony with a bamboo installation to create a huge oval bamboo structure surrounded by bamboo arch tunnels. In works of this kind Teshigahara’s huge quantity of bamboo emphasised the beauty of Oriental aesthetics applied to various spaces and sites. His way of constructing with the bamboo has a connection to the spirit of flower arrangement in *ikebana*.

Installation, Audience and the Environment

Teshigahara’s aesthetic involvement not only focuses on flower arrangement but also upon the tea ceremony. The equality between the tea maker and the guests in the tea ceremony helped him to forge a new innovation in his artistic practice. The relationship between the public and private became redefined and reinforced to produce artwork which, whilst having its root in tradition, had a sense of the contemporary. Further, the link between the “*meaning of others*”¹⁷¹ from the concept of Japanese “*renga*”¹⁷² also inspired Teshgahara to rethink the communal activity between the individual, others, and the space. We can see some of these innovations in a work such as the large bamboo installation “*Monumental Ikebana*” created at 65 Thompson Street in New York City in 1990. Teshigahara simply used bamboo as his material and combined the concept of flower arrangement and sculpture to influence the space in the building. The whole gallery was turned into a bamboo forest, garden and bridge environment. The light came from the top of the building affecting these tunnels to become light-filter-linked places and created a

¹⁷¹ P. 167. *The Delicate Thread: Teshigahara's life in art*, Dore Ashton, Kodansha International, Tokyo, New York, 1997.

¹⁷² An art of poetry reading, a group of people gather together and compose a poem.
<http://www.ahapoetry.com/renga.htm>, 30/03/2004

rhythm of serenity. Huge mounds of bamboo strip arches and twined curving bamboo paths occupied most of the space of the gallery. Crucially the paths led the audience, they entering into an experience of a singular cultural event.

There was one path with bamboo resting on the top of the wooden floor. When the audience walked through the tunnel, the audience's footstep on the bamboo floor made a respondent sound immediately. This sound represents the existence of the audience and, also presented the existence of the artwork and the space. The sound of the viewer's involvement then became one part of the installation without the viewer's intention. When the viewer left, and with the passage of time, the installation and the whole environment returned to its original form.



35. Hiroshi Teshigahara, *Monumental Ikebana*,
65 Thompson Street, New York City, 1990.

The audience viewing through the bamboo strips, observed that the environment and others has become fragmented. If one connected lots of fragments together then one could picture the whole artwork and the space. The audience's experience in the theatrical bamboo installation was one of flux: perception of space and material in continuous change, fragmented, coming together and dissolving, and experience of a

process of discovery. Throughout the bamboo paths are there reminders of the ancient *Ch'an* master wondering and doubting deep in the middle of the bamboo grove seeking the Wisdom of ultimate truth? *Ch'an* seeks authentic communication with the surroundings, and it can be argued that this is manifest in Teshigahara's bamboo installation. The whole project fully invites the wanderer to communicate within and with the environment.

Teshigahara created an installation for the audience to experience a "third" place inside the gallery, architectural or outdoor space. He invited them to walk onto this third path and carry their minds to the farthest distance. Past experience and the self-experience within the installation combine together and stay with the audience to become a future experience resource. The past, the present and the future are continuing, entwined with each other.

The participation of walking through the huge bamboo installation fascinated the mind of the spectator, had immediate impact, and this intention to communicate in an interactive way was at the centre of the work. To participate in the bamboo installation becomes the relevant activity in seeking the truth of reality. This could be compared to a monk, seeking Wisdom, becoming enlightened from an incident of chopping wood where some pieces hit the bamboo.

Teshigahara creates a poetic atmosphere with simple materials. The simplicity of the material contains a profound meaning likened to the simplicity of personal experience and enjoyment. One sees the space as his own self-experience and that of his audience. In *Ch'an* teachings, the process and direct experience are important as the final product. The experience with Teshigahara's bamboo installation is very simple, immediate and full of pleasure.

Cultural Context

Reconsidering Teshigahara's large bamboo installation work: it gathers both traditional Japanese culture (ceramic, flower arrangement, sculpture, tea ceremony, and *Ch'an* philosophy) and contemporary installation practice together and presents a singular environment in which audiences from various social and cultural backgrounds (in for example, Paris, Spain, U.S.A. and Japan) could participate or interact. Teshigahara redefined the value of tradition and sought to find a "modern" concept for it, to put it into the contemporary situation. He examined the notion of the public and private of classic Japanese tradition and brought his audience into the world of direct experience. In his work we can see that the poetic *Ch'an yi jing* and traditional spatial engagement can produce experimental installation in relation to particular sites. These installations became a bridge for him to explore his understanding of traditional and modern concepts, as well as a medium to explore the relationship between his creative mind and the recipient minds of others.

I have looked at artists who produce installation work in which situation, materials, objects and spaces come together to form artworks capable of providing a *yi jing* environment for audience participation created out of an aesthetic unity. I have shown that the ways in which these artist's activity and self-awareness, choice and use of natural materials, spatial manipulation and approach to their audience share characteristics and have a connection to Eastern philosophy. Studying certain works by Turrell, Long and Teshigahara from the perspective of Eastern concepts had shown me that those concepts can provide me with a useful and instructive framework for my own practice.

When I consider my own practice I can relate to the above three artists. When

examining my current situation between the East and West I feel the need to rethink the value of my traditional Chinese background and to examine the possibility of integrating the traditional concepts of *yi jing* and *Ch'an* with my contemporary circumstances. My practice therefore tests issues such as my personal artistic interpretation of *yi jing* and *Ch'an*, the materials which I choose, how I work with nature, my approach to audience experience and how I respond to the space of particular sites and locations.

Summary

In this chapter I have considered not only the general issue of East-West influence and cross cultural possibilities within a contemporary practice but have also shown that Eastern philosophy can be a useful tool when considering examples of installation. In my own practice, as I will show in the next chapter, it has gradually become the guiding principle in the development and realization of projects of work, the centre of my practice.

I believe that *yi jing* aesthetics provide such a useful framework or foundation because of the close similarity *yi jing* has to the “spirit” of certain contemporary art forms. *Yi jing* as a state of mind is composed of two elements – *yi* (a thought, an idea and mind) and *jing* (state of phenomenon). Creating the phenomenon of *yi jing* is considered to be the highest achievement for a Chinese artist. An achievement brought about through a concept which guides the artist in considering the state of his artistic subject (the world and him), to be filtered through his own experience. The artist therefore comes to ultimately realise the emptiness of all subject phenomena. The creation of *yi jing* through art will also give the viewer an insight into the unity of “I” and nature.

For example, when we look at Chinese landscape painting, the landscape in the painting seems to exist somewhere in real time, but that is not exactly the case. Those mountains, trees and rivers are a result of the *yi jing* phenomenon and the viewer can imagine himself or herself walking or climbing in such an environment. The artist created the landscape painting through his feelings, which come from the artist's own comprehensive experience of life.

When the artist's thoughts, feelings and understanding of life as a whole meet, they fuse into a sudden enlightenment. This creates a *yi jing* atmosphere appropriate to experiencing that particular environment. The painting has now become a symbolic phenomenon, and not just a copy from nature. We could say that the thought has been fully represented without any additional anecdotal information.

I believe the development and introduction of new concepts and new forms in the present time makes it an exciting moment to review traditional ideas, forms and concepts. Though in much contemporary Chinese art the traditional aesthetics of *yi jing* have been forgotten I can see a possibility for my own practice where thousands of years of sophisticated Eastern wisdom might be combined with contemporary artistic concepts. The study of James Turrell, Richard Long and Hiroshi Teshigahara shows me that there is a context for a practice of this kind and encourages me in my ambition to redefine the meaning of *yi jing* in a contemporary situation, with contemporary art forms.

Chapter 5

Eastern Eyes and Contemporary Creations

My research into the nature of Oriental aesthetic theory, the function and philosophy of garden design, the spatial engagement and the concept of audience participation in environmental installation practice would also provide me an influential background for investigation into my personal sculptural practice. Through my own practice I wish to employ the Oriental aesthetic *yi jing* and the *Ch'an* concept as a link to expand my research interests, and use environmental installation as a form to represent my personal conceptual development in the contemporary situation.

Spiritual Practice and Art

I redefine my artwork as a bridge of translation to connect the point between different cultural experiences in order to achieve a kind of common understanding. From the previous experience in my research, I tended to choose different natural materials as elements to emphasise my concept to make connection with the entire environment. This progression has included the meaning of the natural materials in a changing contemporary situation.

I also view myself as an element. I think part of the energy in my work is that I have the opportunity to make art in a clean and white studio or gallery, amazing and beautiful forest, or empty and un-refurbished architectural space which are every strong and powerful. Somehow part of the power and the energy come from being alone in such places.

Also the process of daily life has become a matter for me to research. As a *Ch'an* master said "*No special effort is needed to understand the Way of Buddha. Just be natural and do what you should do. Go to the toilet, put on your clothes, eat when you are hungry, sleep when you are tired. Fools laugh at me for saying this, of course, but the wise know this is the truth. As the ancients say, 'they are fools who seek enlightenment from without rather than from within.'*"¹⁷³ To be a Buddha will not be my priority decision to make at present. What I am more concerned about is to find the essence of self from the artwork which I create. A *self-Satori* would help me to reach the high standards of creation.

I am trying to rediscover through calligraphy, sound, and natural materials a personal but shareable sense of Ultimate essence. I think art is both very personal and impersonal. Also, that it is involved with self emotion and self realisation offering the audience what I think and understand about true reality. Being a good observer, but also to give them peace and happiness which has come from the deep ocean of my heart. That function is very simple.

Through a deep influence of *Ch'an*, my works show a strong character and I wish to create a poetic and theoretical notion of *yi jing* by employing *Taoism* and *Ch'an* philosophy and different physical elements. Each of the materials, such as charcoal, Chinese ink, muslin, bracken, birch and hazel tree, sisal string, rice paper, and cooking materials, has its own different function. Through the several practices, those elements were employed in order to develop a form of art that would present the unity of subjective mind and objective phenomena. My projects contain a natural sense of serenity with an essence of my own spirit carrying through from one project

¹⁷³ P. 243, 100 Excerpts from Zen Buddhist texts, edited by Lan-Sheng Jiang, 台灣商務印書, Lit. Taipei, 1998

to another. In order to achieve the aim of this research, I wish to analyse the evidence of the personal spirit that exists through the materials I choose, and create artworks within which phenomena are continually changing.

Ch'an once taught us that what we see, hear, think, speak, smell and touch is constantly changing through the physical phenomena. All of those phenomena existed with impermanent physical attributes in the world. From observing my own creation, I feel that there is a “self-nature” within the external phenomena of the forms I create. My consciousness is also therefore, carried from one project to the next unconsciously. As Tibetan Buddhism describes, the consciousness is carried with one into the next life in the reincarnation process.

Serenity exists within this phenomena world and it also appears in the spiritual world. In metaphysical terms two principles are combined in man, one mental and one material. His spirit is something that cannot be analysed and physically touched, as the truth of *Ch'an* cannot be given in words.

Peace doesn't mean quiet. Everything has its own meaning. The meaning which the artist gives is not the whole truth. A quiet piece of work could have a very powerful “voice”. If the “voice” does not include physical sound, will it still touch people's minds without physical attachment?

I am trying to understand the existence of natural reality through entirely personal experiences. To examine the existence of mind, attitude, emotion, expression and metaphysical reality (spiritual) through the artwork (material). These phenomena of existence are changing all the time but the inner consciousness and quality remains more constant.

All the projects I have completed have contained my own ontological experience about the connection between nature and myself, and I have been 'living' together with my works from the beginning to the present. The relationship seems to start with a very tiny connection and then expands over time. How large is it? I can never answer the question at this point in time. This form, which I created, shows the evidence of myself in existence. This form is constantly changing. What I see, hear, consider, and smell will influence the way I think. I seem to see my true nature through the creation, meditation training and observation of the surrounding environment. This is what *Ch'an* masters thought of as living in the present time and creating a harmony with our heart, body and nature.

Ch'an has been fully developed in China for more than a thousand years. I am a person living in the twenty-first century. How am I going to make a connection between the past and present? I am learning from each project a fresh direction, in a discovery trail that leads me always to the next, and the next, but also connects me to the past. Dug out of some unconscious memory, but with my own recognition.

Everything is the same. The Tao Te Ching says that Tao has no colour, sound or shape and cannot be examined bit by bit for it is really one indivisible whole. So there seems to be no difference between the artwork, audience and the artist himself. Art, audience, space and artist are united together and support each other. What kind of impact will the audience experience when they see the artwork? What kind of work can build a bridge between the artist and the audience to promote a peaceful, calming and happy feeling? Hopefully there are no barriers to full enjoyment and participation.

Physically, the artwork becomes inert after the artwork has just been created. It has contained all representations of what the materials and my thoughts had intended in order to produce it. However, metaphysically, the artwork still represents a level of awareness. The “voice” of the work has come towards the audience from the main body of the artwork. A conversation has begun when the audience is participating in the space. This conversation and these feelings arise from the bottom of the spine going up to the brain and are dissolved into the audience’s mind. This sense of peace exists inside my body and is present automatically on the appearance of the artwork without any further action by me. At any time and place it happens to be, it dissolves into the water just like salt; there is no separation of pure salt and pure water. The identity of ego-self disappears as self dissolves into every part of the particular time and space. The materials that the artist has chosen have become part of the “artist-myself” so that the artist has become part of the artwork. The space around the artwork is part of the artwork. The space, artwork, audience and artist have become one.

Ten Projects

My research has inspired me to carry out ten projects in various locations and employing different materials to represent my understanding of the phenomenon of *Ch’an yi jing* within my installation concepts during the period of time of my research. The projects were trying to test my view of these issues such as, the artist’s personal interpretation, the materials which I chose, the spatial engagement and the audience participation. It proved to be important evidence to assist the development of my study.



The Deep Ocean of the Heart

Project 1

Title: The Deep Ocean of the Heart

When: 13th -15th January 2000

Where: The Central Station, Newcastle upon Tyne

Aims:

In this initial project the aim was to expand and examine ideas which had images in the last stages of my MFA studio work, and determine whether they might form a useful point of departure for my Ph.D. studio research.

My MFA examination presentation included paintings and installation works (Paintings: “the Dream of Butterfly”, “Summer Blossom”. Charcoal Installation: “246 Pieces”, “Expectation” and “Last Peace”) which had both been concerned with my interest in the meeting of Western and Eastern visual forms, aesthetic and subjects. My MFA dissertation (Zen, Void and Spirit — An investigation into the mutual influence of Eastern and Western concepts in the twentieth century art) was a study of this cross-cultural phenomenon, and in my practical work I had begun to consider using my own artistic creativity as an example to build a bridge between the two different cultures. In particular I had become interested in *Ch’an* philosophy and its concern with the state of unity between Man and Heaven. I had begun to consider its potential to impact on my developing manipulation of contemporary ‘Western’ art forms.

In this context the *Ch’an* notion of unity has inspired and given me a source of

consideration of the relationship between the artwork (material, form, scale), space, audience and artist. Further, it creates a question of whether the focus lent by the production of an artwork in these conditions might in turn lead to a greater understanding of *Ch'an* wisdom – where there is a unity it is implicit that links and connections are in all directions.

Project description:

Site selection

I would like to develop the concepts of my most recent MFA work by considering more carefully the important issues of location. I wished to use similar material and form but to bring the artwork from the studio into a public space. Part of the question I was asking was how could an artwork relate to public situation? The example of a Chinese landscape garden and Japanese *Ch'an* garden were useful to me in thinking about this: this is beautiful inside but needs a door to be opened to let the audience into the environment, to become part of it and thus provided an understanding of the unity between Man and Heaven. The need of the artwork to have an audience to participate, and thus complete it, was another related issue.

It was important therefore to find a location which presented a connection to everyday life and to a wide audience, and where I might find a sense of the audience's engagement with the work. Beyond these questions of the scale, characteristic and practicalities of a particular space could be left open.

I searched the city for an appropriate space, one which was unlike a studio space, which was more like an open architectural space. When I walked into the open

spaces of Newcastle Central Station I immediately felt it offered the right kind of possibilities; that it was a space with which I could work and be inspired by. Within the station I searched for a suitable location and began discussing with the station manager the possibility of installing a work within the station.

Two possible sites were discussed: the first by the WHS bookstore, and the second in the space in front of the ticket office in the huge passage between the Metro entrance and the general station areas. I selected the second site:

- The bookstore site was small and located too much to the side of the main station areas.
- The second site had a four metre high ceiling that would enable me to suspend material at various heights.
- The site had a ground area large enough to construct a work which would form a comfortable relationship to the huge scale of the station architecture.
- There would be a steady flow of passengers through and around this space.

Date and time-scale

The date of 13th - 15th January was decided upon consultation with the GNER Newcastle station managers based on their commitments, and the logistics of preparing the work and installing it. I set a timetable as follows: Further site research – half day; development of form and preparation of materials – four days work; installation – half day; display and documentation – three days; removal – two

hours.

Project development

In the studio I started to draw a plan of the space, and to consider the shape and form of the piece of work I planned to place into the station.

I decided to use the form of construction which I had used previously in the MFA



Positioning charcoal, Central Station

presentation: pieces of Charcoal (fisted size) suspended above the ground on nylon fishing line to form a sense of volume and mass even though there was space running through the form in-between the charcoal pieces. A bit of bamboo was tied underneath the lumps of charcoal to support them. When the wind blows on this construction the charcoal moves slightly, revolving.

I made trial forms: firstly a spherical shape, and then a three-dimensional “diamond” shape which I finally chose for the installation. The diamond was approximately 90 x 90 x 100 cm in dimension. I also placed concentric circles with a maximum diameter of about 4 metres, formed from charcoal pieces, on the floor directly below the suspended charcoal.

Installation

The work was not completed in a fast way but was the result of a series of actions carried out slowly over the course of an afternoon. I started by attaching the suspended charcoal pieces to the ceiling and proceeded to consider how to arrange

the charcoal circles on the floor. I decided to start from the centre and move slowly towards the outside to form a circle of 3-4 metres diameter. The charcoal was placed piece by piece, from small pieces to large ones. I decided to leave a gap between two circles, this gave the work a sense of a vast empty space between the centre and outside circle.

Documentation

The work was documented by digital photographs and black and white photographs.

Reflection

A number of key issues arose from the project both in terms of practical realisation and content. Some were identified through reflection during the making and installation of the work, others through consideration of the work following its completion and in discussion with the audience.

One thing I missed in the development of the project in the studio was the experience of the local environment – the experience of the station, its staff, the passengers, and my own sense of working within the space. The relationship of material, time, and space could not be predicted from the studio base. From a *Ch'an* point of view to experience the essence of true experience is to participate in the movement of current time, the present environment including oneself, others, and the surrounding subjects, to allow one to go behind these phenomena and to understand true wisdom.

In the installation of the work I began to understand that the experience of the

process was very much part of the content of the work. The procedure of actions is like *Ch'an* practice: seeing the truth from the process of being.

Once the work had been installed in the station I needed to be present in order to keep the work secure. This provided me with an opportunity to meet and talk to people. Passengers demonstrated a variety of reactions to the work when passing by. Children were attracted by its movement and would be curious to pick it up. Some adults walked past without appearing to notice but many would then return back to view the work: there was definitely a sense of something unusual having changed their usual environment.



Audience viewing the work

The choice of material was commented on and a connection made to the city history, “bringing coals to Newcastle”. Newcastle’s rich history of the coal trade in the past, in particular the way coal was brought into the station to then be transferred on to other destinations, made a point of reference and connection for some of the audience: the location impacting on the work as well as the work impacting on the location. The history of the location and modern life activities were connected with each other.

Conclusion:

- The project enabled me to reflect further on my representation of ‘East

meets West' at the beginning of my research.

- It helped me to develop further aspects of my MFA work through consideration of the impact of site and location.

- However, its crucial importance was in the new suggestions and inspiration that resulted from it. It provided evidence as to how the artwork and the artistic process, site, the audience and the artist can communicate with each other – how synergies can be created, how things come together to form an indefinable 'whole'. As such it posed new questions to be explored and helped define the questions which would become central to my research activity, with a focus on *Ch'an* becoming clear. For example, the charcoal mobile was moved by the immaterial element¹⁷⁴ – the material merging with the immaterial as described in *Ch'an* – the material and immaterial within and without each other. So too the connection between modernity and history.

¹⁷⁴ Air pushed into the station hall by the trains pulling into the Victorian style station

Project 3

Title: The Fairy Land

When: 3rd - 23rd June 2000

Where: Chiswell Woodland Park, Tynemouth, North



The Fairy Land

Description

Site selection

Having previously been concerned with bringing artwork from the studio to an open architectural space, I decided to take the new project in an outdoor

Project 2

Title: The Fairy Land

When: 3rd - 23rd June 2000

Where: Chopwell Woodland Park, Tyne and Wear

Material: Ash, Birch and Hazel branches, Bracken, Sisal string

Aims:

After the project in the Central station, a new project was designed to create a phenomenon of harmony between Mankind and Nature, and also to explore ideas of how to make a closer connection between them.

The notion of the unity between mankind and nature is an important issue in *Ch'an* practice. It inspired and gave me a source of consideration bringing various natural elements, including natural materials, a natural working place, and a natural site for exhibition, for an art creation. The artist would get to know more about nature by working with it, and so would the audience by the activity of observation in the natural environment.

Description:

Site selection

Having previously been successful in bringing my artwork from the studio to an open architectural space, I would further develop this new project in an outdoor

space. A few of the artists¹⁷⁵ who work with the land had inspired me to consider the possibilities of making an artwork in a natural space. I would like to use my artwork as a platform to invite the audience to observe the natural environment. The audience would be brought to an open gallery with the sky as the roof, the earth as the floor and the sunlight as the spotlight in an art gallery. This natural site would therefore become part of the artwork, and not just a place to exhibit the artwork.

However, it was not easy to find a “natural site” which would not only allow me to install my artwork but also be sure that an audience would show up. One of my friends suggested that I contact the Forest Enterprise for some suggestions, and luckily I gained the permission to install my work in a place called Chopwell Woods¹⁷⁶, where they were celebrating an annual forest life festival.

As soon as I entered Chopwell woods, I immediately felt it was the kind of natural environment that I needed. I soon had the idea of making the installation with the natural resources available in the forest. I believed it would be a pleasant experience to work in such a quiet place with fresh air. Within the forest I searched for a suitable location and found some interesting sites. I finally chose the one near an open space in the centre of the forest. The site was located in an area with lots of pine trees and bracken surrounding it and with a hill on one side. With the many bracken plants, it was like a green sea.

The observer may not be aware of this project initially but still discover it by observation. There were two paths on either side of the site. One was towards an open field where there was lots of green bracken sprouting from the ground in the

¹⁷⁵ For example, artists, such as Richard Long, Andy Goldsworthy and Chris Drury.

¹⁷⁶ The location is south west of Newcastle upon Tyne.

summer time. Sunlight came straight into the site around 6-7 o'clock in the morning but throughout the day because of the terrain, there was limited sunlight. At sunset, the yellow light gave more shadow to the site and caused the artwork to be integrated into the environment.



A view of some features of the project

Date and time-scale

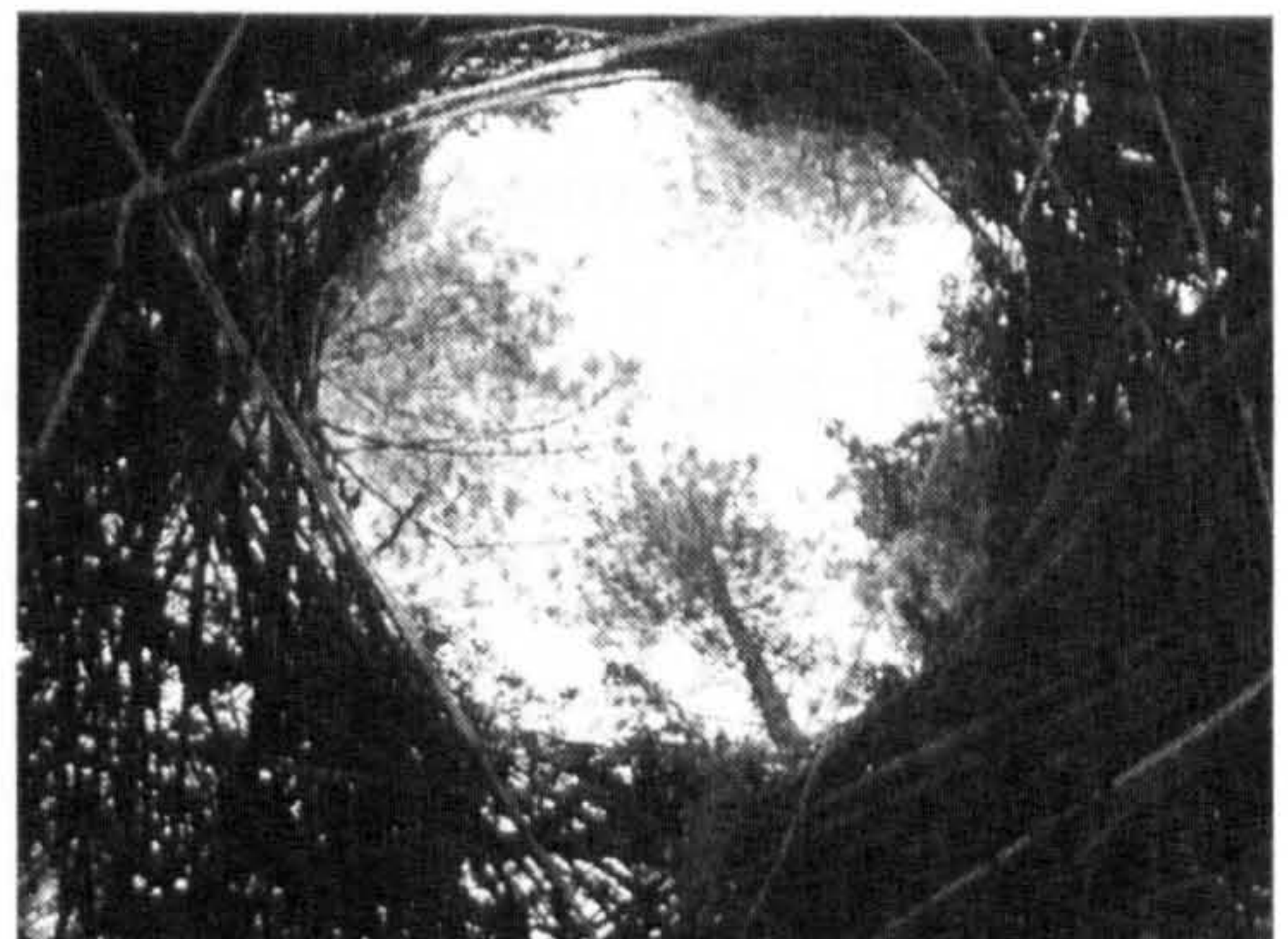
The forest festival was held in July, but I had to finish the project during June because I was having a research trip to Taiwan and Japan. I set a timetable as follows: Further site research – two half days, development of form and preparation of materials – four days work; installation – a week; display and documentation – from time to time; removal – the work was left in the forest and allowed to disappear into the local environment naturally.

Project development

Using natural materials was an important idea in this project and the various plants in the forest seemed to be the best natural materials for this project. Therefore I decided to make use of the materials from the actual location. I also planned to make the sculpture with my bare hands without the help of any man-made tools.

I started my work by looking for the suitable materials. I found the branches of the young Hazel and Birch trees around were quite flexible and had the idea of making wooden balls. The branches were collected from the surrounding area and then bent into a curve. Those bent branches were fixed and tied together with sisal string to form a spherical shape. There were three balls and each one was about 1.5 metres in diameter. They were placed near each other. They created their individual identity and defined their own specific relationship with different locations on the site.

After finishing the three wooden balls, I made use of another natural resource in the woods. I used bracken to create two green square screens. I encircled two pine tree trunks with the sisal string to make the foundation of the screen. I then filled the gaps between the strings with fresh green bracken. Small spaces were left while filling the gaps for the audience to observe the ever-changing landscape. The two screens were made in the same way.



Top: details of the triangle screen.

Bottom left: the bracken screen and ball in the background. Bottom right: three balls.

In addition to the two standing square screens, I also created a triangular one parallel with the ground. It was hung 2 metres above the ground and looked like a green shelter. At the centre of the shelter was a small hole. An observer was able to stand underneath and watch the sky through it. Two additional bracken balls were added to be viewed in the distance through the screens. They were a little bit different from the previous three balls. They were smaller and decorated with bramble.

Installation

Each of the elements, including the three large wooden frame balls, the two bracken balls, and the three green screens were strong enough to be viewed as an individual artwork, but if they were placed too close to each other, there was a possibility of conflict between each of them. Therefore, I needed to consider carefully the positioning of the items.

I decided to place the three wooden frame balls as a group and the two standing square green screens as another. There was a greater distance between the two groups than between the elements within each group which were placed near each other. The triangle screen was placed not very far from the square screen group but far enough to stand as a single element. I originally expected to place the two bracken balls near each other as another group since they looked the same, but to balance the site I decided to place them individually at the two ends of the site. In this circumstance, each of them had a unique existence as whole objects but they were part of each other.

Documentation

The work was documented by digital photographs. Please refer to the illustrations.

Reflection

Making a project in the quiet wood was a unique and pleasant experience. I loved being embraced by the bracing air and the warm sunlight. I loved the smell of the green plants filling in the air. I especially appreciated the serenity in the wood. Most of the time it seemed there was only me in the wood and it was so quite that I could hear the echo of a dropping pine-cone. The quietness in the wood brought peace to my mind, and the inner peace made the wood even quieter. There seemed to be an interaction between the outside world and my inner state. I found I had become part of Nature and Nature had become part of me. A sense of the unity of Man and Nature in the *Ch'an* practice became a reality.

During the time I was working in the wood, I found I was more like a visitor coming to enjoy the beauty of nature instead of an artist coming to make a project. This new identity freed my mind and changed the way I judged my work. I realized I was not here to make an artwork for anyone or any purpose; I was here to enjoy every moment of the working process. An artist might have perfect skills because of the training he had, but he can become trapped by his profession. In order to free myself I needed to use my art to free myself, and thus I was not trapped by being professional.

This new identity of being a visitor avoided artificiality and made me start to think more about the meaning that an artwork can bring to the artist. I was not here to make the artwork for anyone or any purpose. The work seemed to be more natural

than a work created by the subjective judgement of a trained artist would usually be.

I was able to enjoy every moment in the working process. Being able to have a visitor's perspective allow me to enjoy what I was doing in the forest. And being a 'visitor' made this project very different. To forget I was an artist changed the way I worked. Without artist's clothes I was freeing my thought about/from the artwork. From the *Ch'an* point of view, too much attachment and too many intellectual concepts will destroy the value of the work. Thus one will be able to produce a great creation when there is no objective and subjective thought.

The process was as important as the final result. The value of this artwork lies in the process of working and not in the completed work. The joy of creation lies not in the completed work but every moment of being in the local environment, and the very moment of experiencing the creation of the artwork.

This change of identity from the creator to the audience brought more joy to the working process and gave freedom, with every moment and every action becoming important, not just the completed work. Being in every moment, in the current time, the experience of being in the woods was more important than that of completing the artwork. Therefore, every moment directly or indirectly related to my work had become important. The experience of working in the woods was more important than the final product.

The path that I made unconsciously was part of the installation, evidence of being in the space. I had noticed that when circling the pine trees and picking the bracken that I kept walking the same route thus creating a small path. The path just appeared automatically on the ground. This represented a different aspect of the

work in space and time. It made me think of artist Richard Long's work. Walking is one of his mediums. The path he walked was timeless, universal, understandable and easy to make. The walk and the path which I hadn't planned before I did the project recorded my progress by time and chance. The path then became part of the installation without the artist's intention.

With the passage of time the path was fully covered again by bracken. The movement of the trees broke the sisal string; the screens didn't last for very long. However, the nature of the work was to be left to "age" and integrate with the natural location through the process of time.

The choice of the materials was from the local natural surroundings. There was a transformation of natural materials into a new form which were then left to return to the original natural environment.

The existence of "Non-Form" exists within the Realistic Form. Whether its look stays the same from the very beginning to the end, or whether it would exist forever was not important. The evidence of its existence had been proved by my working experience.

The main spirit of the work lies in the process of making, not the product. Every action of working and the installation of the work (bending, tying and placing), has its own meaning not just one of the means of creating the work. To live in the here and now is the most realistic concept.

The only problem I was worried about was that the materials would not retain their fresh appearance on the exhibition day since the artwork would have to be

constructed two weeks prior to the opening day.

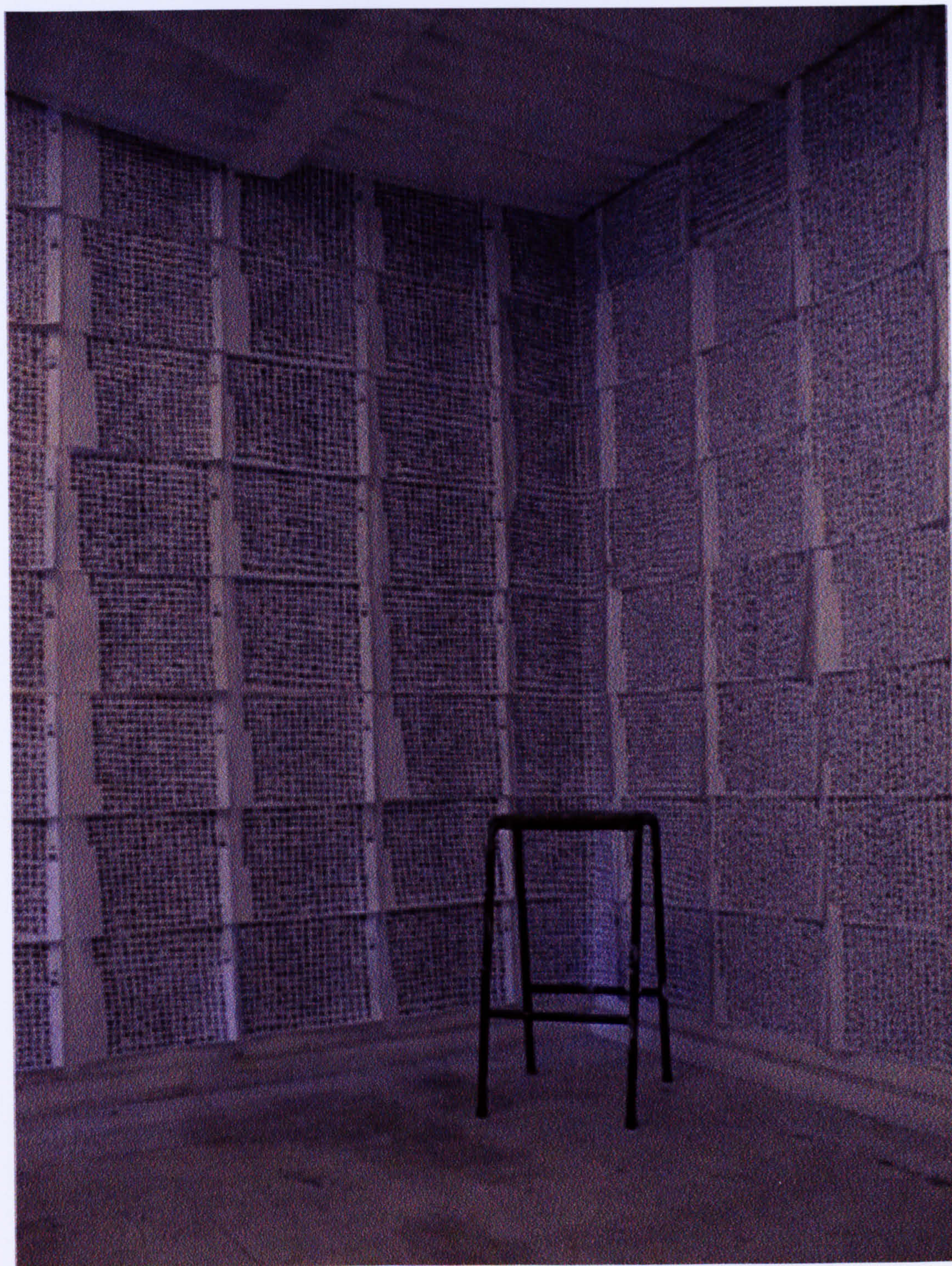
I am making an artwork as nature does. Every single moment is important. I am one within nature; and nature is inside me. I have never separated from nature.

Conclusion:

- This project was aiming to create a harmonious phenomenon of man-made and natural artistic objects with *Ch'an* concepts. The personal creations such as, the screens, the wooden balls and the bracken balls were installed and constructed within the forest environment. The environment, sound, breeze, sunlight and the woods brought the man-made items and the local situation much closer together. The state of subjectivity of personal creation and the objectivity of realistic phenomena were integrated in the local situation. The creator and the artwork became part of each other through the conformation of the natural medium.

- This project provided an opportunity for the audience to observe the changing of natural phenomena within the local environment. The artwork, which I created in the forest, helped them to exercise their own observation and interpretation of the artwork.

- The forest environment inspired me to create this project. The process of making the objects brought me deep inside the local environment. The unity of artist and surroundings were integrated strongly. I personally became a part of the space in the woods. The woods therefore became part of me. The distance between Nature and Man became much closer through the sharing of the space. This is an example of the unity of Man and Nature.



The Heart Sutra

Project 3

Title: The Heart Sutra

When: December 1999 – May 2001

Where: Studio, University of Newcastle upon Tyne

Material: A3 plain paper, Chinese ink

Aims:

Here the aim was to transform the daily basis of my life practice into an aesthetic language in order to test my self-existence, self-emotion and spirit by repeating a piece of Heart Sutra, and create a new form in a studio space.

My investigation in the previous project presented a real relationship between Man and Nature. The project extended my concept towards an external environment with natural materials. In this project, I intended to focus on the relationship between the studio space, artwork and myself. The teaching of *Ch'an* stresses that self-experience within the daily life situation is a method towards the understanding of great wisdom. Furthermore, the project questions whether the creation can transmit Oriental aesthetics and elements into my present time frame and living situation.

Description:

Site selection

I wished to create an artwork and develop my concept of the unification of subject and object in an internal space. I developed my work and concepts in external space in my previous projects. I wished to use traditional elements and materials, but look further back into an interior based situation. The question I asked myself was, how can a creation bring the studio and myself together? The aesthetic theory of *yi jing* provided me a useful concept to redefine the space in terms of my own creation. The notion of self-experience within daily life practice was also considered as being a useful concept to achieve my aim.

I was very familiar with the space, which was an environment I have worked in almost every day for several years. It has become a familiar part of my life. The relation between the space and myself was strong, but perhaps I had never really appreciated the studio fully before I started to think of this project.

The studio initially existed as a working environment for hanging paintings, pictures, sketches and drawings. I intended to change the format of the space from a working environment into an experimental space.

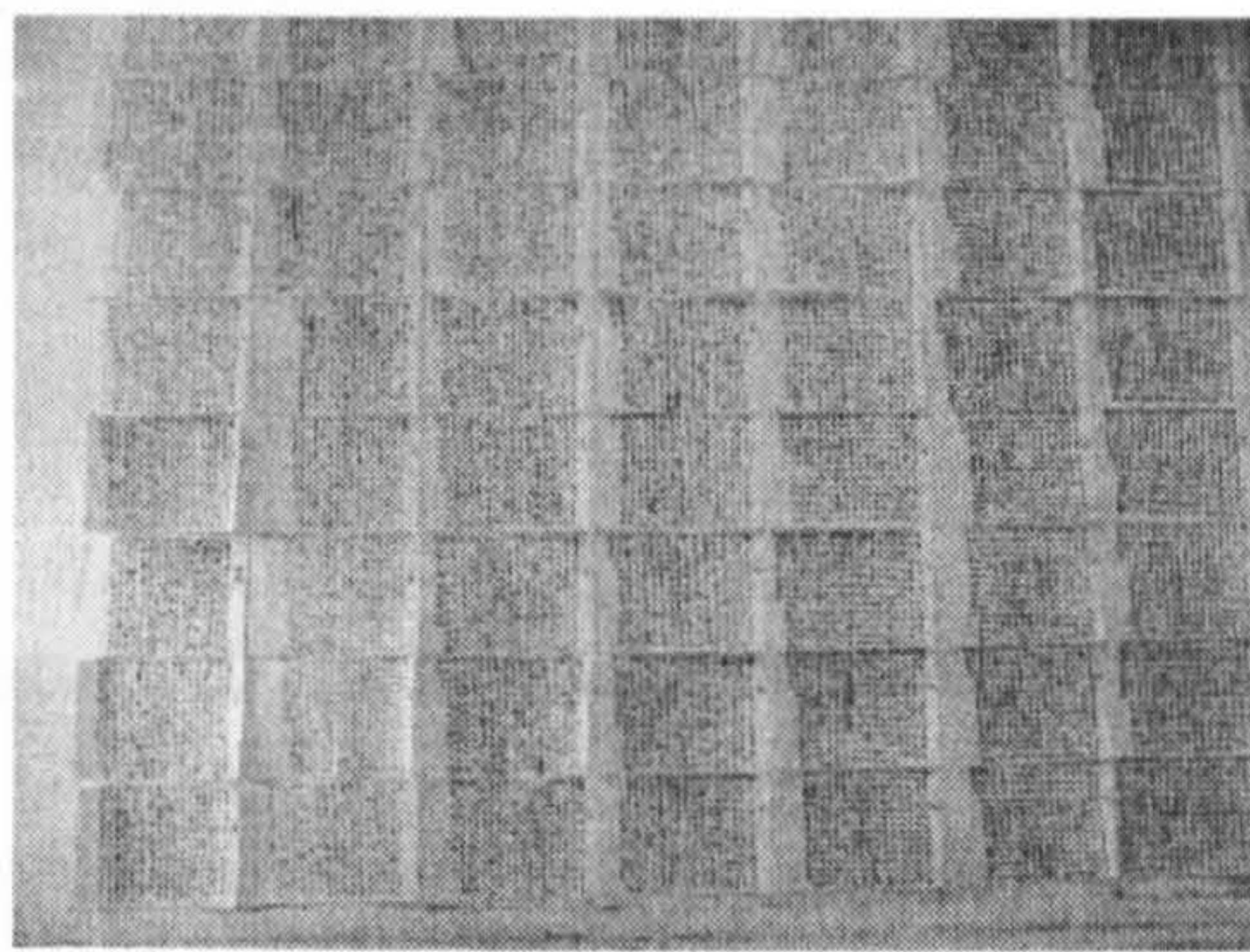
Date and time-scale

The dates for this project extended for almost one and a half years. The writing would not be finished until all the walls were covered in paper. I wrote one or more pages everyday. It could take me 15 minutes to complete a page if I wrote quickly. The paper was installed immediately after I had finished the writing. All the papers were installed and displayed on the wall during the completion of the project. It took one day to remove all the paper.

Project development

I had an inspiration to create a work from my contemporary life. Why not use the Heart Sutra as a medium to create a work? The Heart Sutra is the smallest of the sacred Buddhist scriptures of which there are many. However, the Heart Sutra and its teaching are considered by many scholars to be the most essential of all Mahayana texts. It contains the wisdom of understanding handed down over the centuries having been copied, assiduously by those scholar monks of every Buddhist School.

I repeatedly wrote the Heart Sutra on an A3 size piece of paper everyday. Training myself in a very simple way to just repeat the Heart Sutra with the single point of my brush. *Ch'an* describes the wisdom contained as daily life practice just like “carrying water and cutting wood”.¹⁷⁷



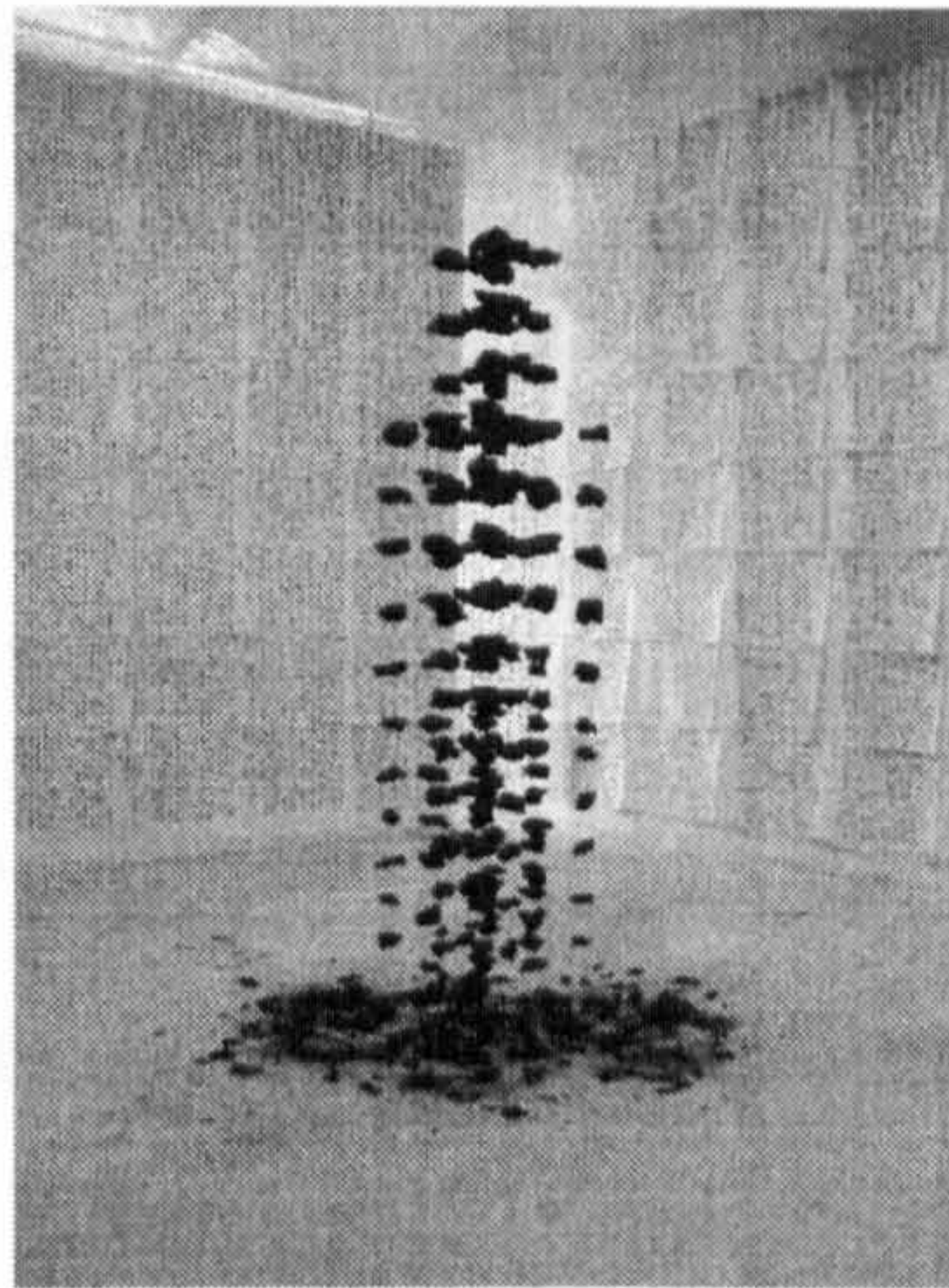
Left: detail of the calligraphy. Right: a whole wall of calligraphy.

Sometimes I wrote only once a day or repeated a few pages in an hour. Personal emotions altered my ability to carry on with the same process; sometimes it was hard to finish a page. Daily movements, emotions, the speed of writing and distraction by others made the writing appear in different styles. My emotion and

¹⁷⁷ Carrying water and cutting wood were the most common functions of life in the history of *Ch'an* training. To copy a Heart Sutra is basic training involving physical exercise and mind meditation.

concentration decided the “destiny” of the page.

I covered the whole studio walls with paper. Another element was introduced into the black and white space. It was a human form made by suspending pieces of charcoal in the middle of the studio. Concentric circles of charcoal were arbitrarily dropped underneath the hanging piece. The purpose was to try to alter the appearance of the work and see how the elements affected the original form.



Concentric circles of charcoal
with calligraphy installation

Installation

Heart Sutra writings continued to be attached to the wall from one side to the other in the studio. An additional partition wall was built to create an enclosed experimental space for this project. The floor was painted white to unify the space as a whole. A piece of representative human form made by suspending pieces of charcoal was installed in the middle of the studio. Concentric circles of charcoal were arbitrarily dropped underneath the hanging piece.

Documentation

The work was documented by digital photographs please refer to illustrations.

Reflection

A number of key thoughts were inspired by the project both in a practical and ideological sense. Some thoughts were identified through reflection during the making and installation of the work, others through consideration of the work following its completion and in discussion with the audience.

The Heart Sutra for me is an inspiration (or vehicle) as well as part of my personal daily practice. For a Buddhist to chant the Heart Sutra is part of the training, and I believed it would bring me spiritual awareness. In this project, I see this as part of religion practice, a way to make myself calm and to draw myself away from all distractions. Making art is another part of what I do during the day. To bring these elements together into my life and make artwork became my main inspiration.

Those who can read the characters may understand the deep meaning contained in the Heart Sutra. However, a person of a non-Chinese cultural background can observe and experience the feeling brought out by the calligrapher through his experience of copying, broadening that understanding of the 'Meaning'. The observer is invited to open their Heart and is free to interpret the work and experience the atmosphere of calm impartiality engendered by being in the space.

Each single page of 260 Chinese Characters has been brushed by hand with ink. I am intimately connected to my brush with the paper, the muslin, the wall and window and the brush has recorded my emotions feelings and thoughts. A single stroke provides a good metaphor as to how the brush could work from the artist's inner senses outwards, to be recorded upon paper, wall or window.

Jackson Pollock shifted the emphasis of painting from product to environmental process when he choreographically recorded his locomotion through the space and canvas.¹⁷⁸ For me, the act of writing is a means of constant practice towards perfection – a perfect vehicle for the meditative process of observing the universal flux of life. To name this flux is difficult, if not impossible, but I would call it “directly working with materials and their possibilities.”

A number of people were invited into the space to view and feel the work. Some of the audience described that they felt the sense of calm, cheerfulness and purity from the work and the space. The horizontal and vertical lines gave the space a sense of geometric order. (The way of writing, starts from the top to the bottom and moves from right to left)

Conclusion:

- This work focused upon the discussion of the artist’s own personal progress. Using Chinese characters as a tool to create a form of the unification of the objective matter/phenomenon (materials and forms) and subjective matter/mind (artist’s own considerations and creations). These characters and language have inherent limitations, so I intended to let the location and the artwork speak for itself. And invited the audience to visit my creation and let them be free to interpret the work for themselves.

- My concerns about the work would be more inclined toward spiritual contact than a visual/physical relationship. The audience are invited into the space to

¹⁷⁸ P. 13, *Blurring the Boundaries*, installation art 1969-1996, Museum of Contemporary Art. San Diego, 1999

feel the spirituality and make contact with the physical artwork.

- The past personal history and the present spatial environment were thus connected by my own representation of “self present”.

- The entire installation became one space that was constructed using over three hundred pages of Heart Sutra. Every single character on every page replaced my own emotion and spirit and recorded the function of my daily existence. The writing merged with the whole space spontaneously. The representation of my own existence (the writing) was to become part of the space. A beautiful *yi jing* was created by the unity of the writing and my intentions.

- The audience reportedly found it very peaceful when they walked into the space and felt the meditative atmosphere of the entire space. The reaction of an audience thus became a significant point to observe. The audience has become the observer rather than a participant. They can walk into the space to see it but were not able to touch it physically.

- **Calligraphy**

Why I chose calligraphy as the medium for my installation practice?

Calligraphy repetition is a portrait of myself in the world, my own personal journey through it and the experience that I discovered along the way.

Calligraphy is a discipline for me to expand myself and make an extension of my own body and spirit. The repeated act of writing and using the brush within the hand is a kind of matrix. This is self-emotion and existence rising above the form.

Surely the form is only a vehicle or a visible track of my presentation.

When I look at my hand writing style of calligraphy, I see that it has a connection between my historical teachers and myself. I return back to the history of a thousand years ago to bring this into the contemporary living world. I had thought I had lost the connection of my academic historical tradition, but I may be wrong. I have created a new expressive form but the characters are the evidence that put me back into my own Chinese history roots which I cannot pretend does not belong to me.

What I am doing is a kind of realizing, materialising my self-existence through myself and the materials which I choose. As Antony Gormley (b.1950) stated “*to deal with the mind/body as one organism, and re-present it as one organism rather than the current orthodoxy of the body in pieces, or the body as a battleground.*”¹⁷⁹ It is a truth but somehow is hard to describe. It is connected with my own *Ch'an* practice. Daily life could be considered as meditation training. To examine and perform the evidence of self-existence by daily experience. I breathe in and control my own body, then I write down every single stroke that comes from my memory. Nobody can take the memory away from me. I memorise the word which has been within me and become part of me. This is an ontological experience of production from the inner space in my own body.

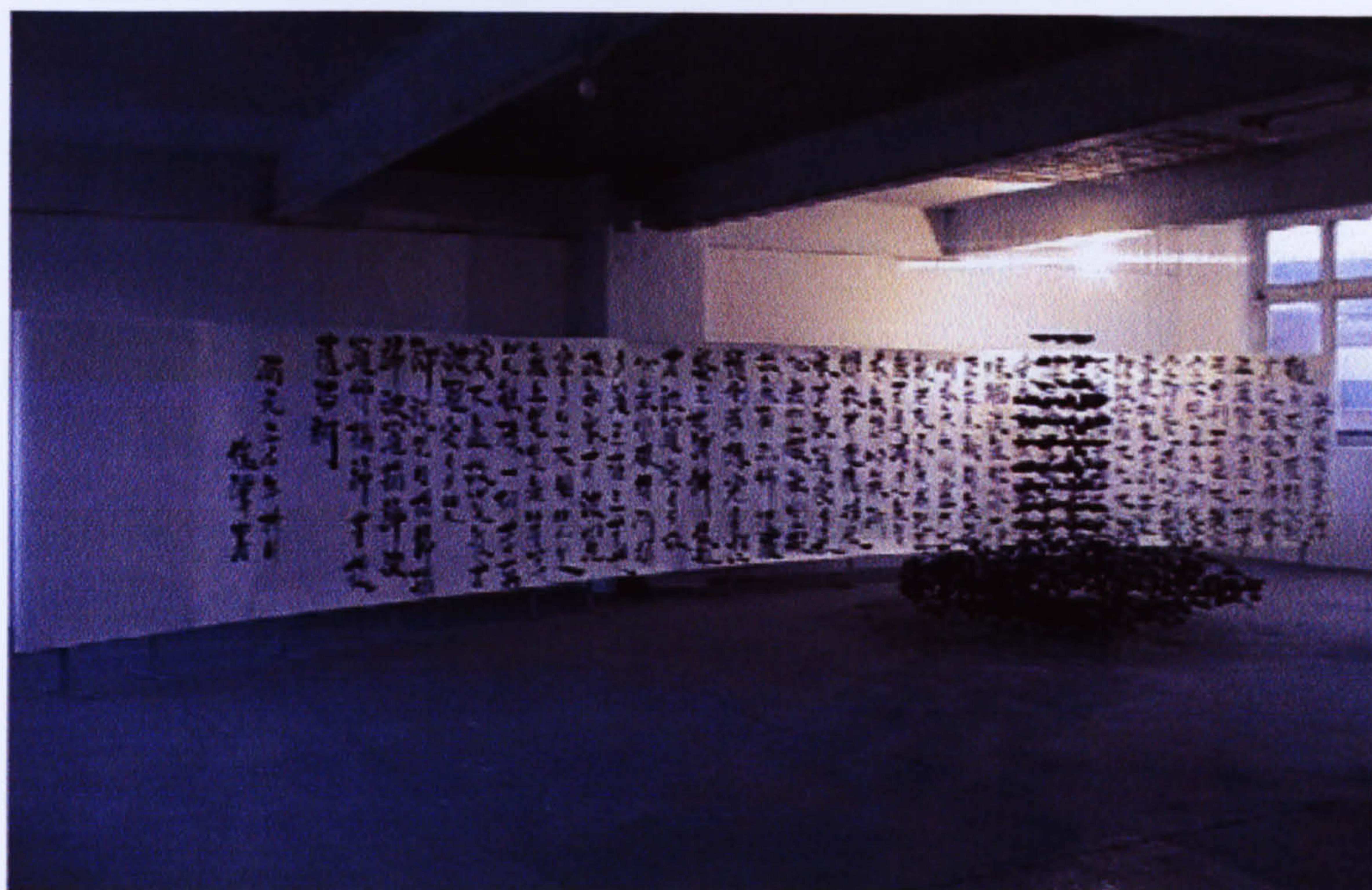
As Antony Gormley said “*I want to start where language ends.*”¹⁸⁰ That is how I felt my work should be. I would like to allow the audience to interpret what they

¹⁷⁹ P. 20, Antony Gormley, John Hutchinson, E.H. Gombrich, Lela B. Njtin, W.J.T. Mitchell, Phaidon Press LTD., London, 2000

¹⁸⁰ P. 12, Antony Gormley, John Hutchinson, E.H. Gombrich, Lela B. Njtin, W.J.T. Mitchell, Phaidon Press LTD., London, 2000

interpret. I would allow my creations to be able to speak for themselves.

The passing of time is marked by the simple activities undertaken by the writing process. The power of nature and I gather together through phenomenon changed by the changing natural light. The life of my “self” existence has appeared onto the surface of the creations.



The Smiling Soul

Description:

Installation:

Project 4

Title: The Smiling Soul

When: 15th – 25th October 2000

Where: Stowell Street Gallery, China Town, Newcastle upon Tyne

Materials: Charcoal, fishing line, a panel of 10 metres of calligraphy

Aims:

This project's aim was to seek the possibility of combining both black ink characters and charcoal, and transform both into a new form of work in a non-refurbished architectural environment.

Both installation and *yi jing* concept are interesting in developing the relationship between the audience and artwork. My installation research explained that the artist brings different materials together and transforms them into a new phenomenon in a site-specific space, and invites the audience to view the work. My study of the *yi jing* concept has also emphasised the relationship between the creation and the audience. I had started to combine those concepts together and adjoined my own subjective idea to create a new temporary artwork.

Description:

Site selection

I had an idea to develop my concept outside the studio space but this was still to

remain as an indoor space. There was a site an upstairs room of an un-refurbished architect's office. The building was located in Newcastle China Town (Stowell Street). The architects offer the space for artists to exhibit their work. The location of the space presents a strong connection with the oriental cooking industry, which has provided me with a good reason to exhibit my artwork in the space.

There are windows on each side, facing east and west, and the space is fully filled by sunlight. These windows provide a connection between the external and internal world.

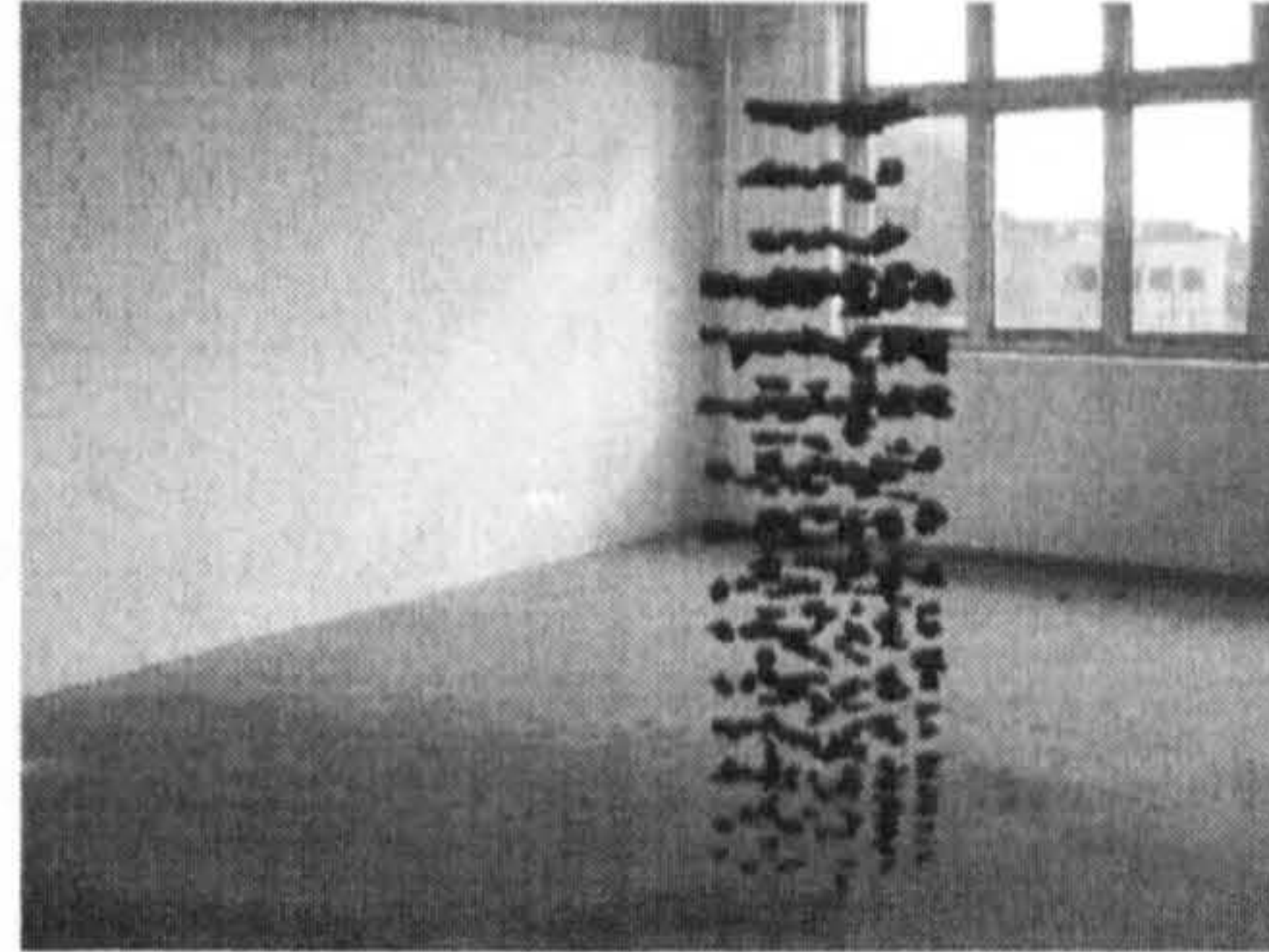
Date and time-scale

The opening date (2 – 6pm, 15th October) and exhibition time (15th – 25th October) were arranged between the space owner and ourselves. I was given nearly a week to set up my work. I set a timetable as follows: further site research – two half days; development of form and preparation of materials – two days; installation – four working days; removal – one working day.

Project development

The panel of calligraphy was written on the floor in the Long Gallery at the Fine Art Department. It needed a long space to spread the roll of paper on the floor. I needed a very quiet environment in order to concentrate upon writing. For recording proposes I also needed to take some images whilst I was writing the calligraphy. The action of taking photographs distracted my concentration on the process of writing, which is against the nature of *Ch'an*. (which is only thinking or doing one thing at a time.) A mistake was made and destroyed the whole Sutra in a Chinese art sense. (To

write Chinese calligraphy it needs to flow without a break) I continued to finish the calligraphy to the end and I hoped that if I decided to display the piece, the only person who noticed the mistake would be myself.



Left: writing calligraphy. Right: partial installation of the concentric circles of charcoal.

The writing was pinned on a number of notice boards. The panel of calligraphy was fixed behind the charcoal and wasn't able to move in the air so that it became more like a poster rather than free moving. I was disappointed as it lacked cohesion between the three elements and it didn't use the space in the way I intended.

The charcoal form was made within the space, and I had an image in my mind of how it would appear. The hanging pieces of charcoal would be presented as a shape of human scale. The shape would be surrounded at the base of the sculpture with many concentric circles. It turned out like the stars in a Galaxy.

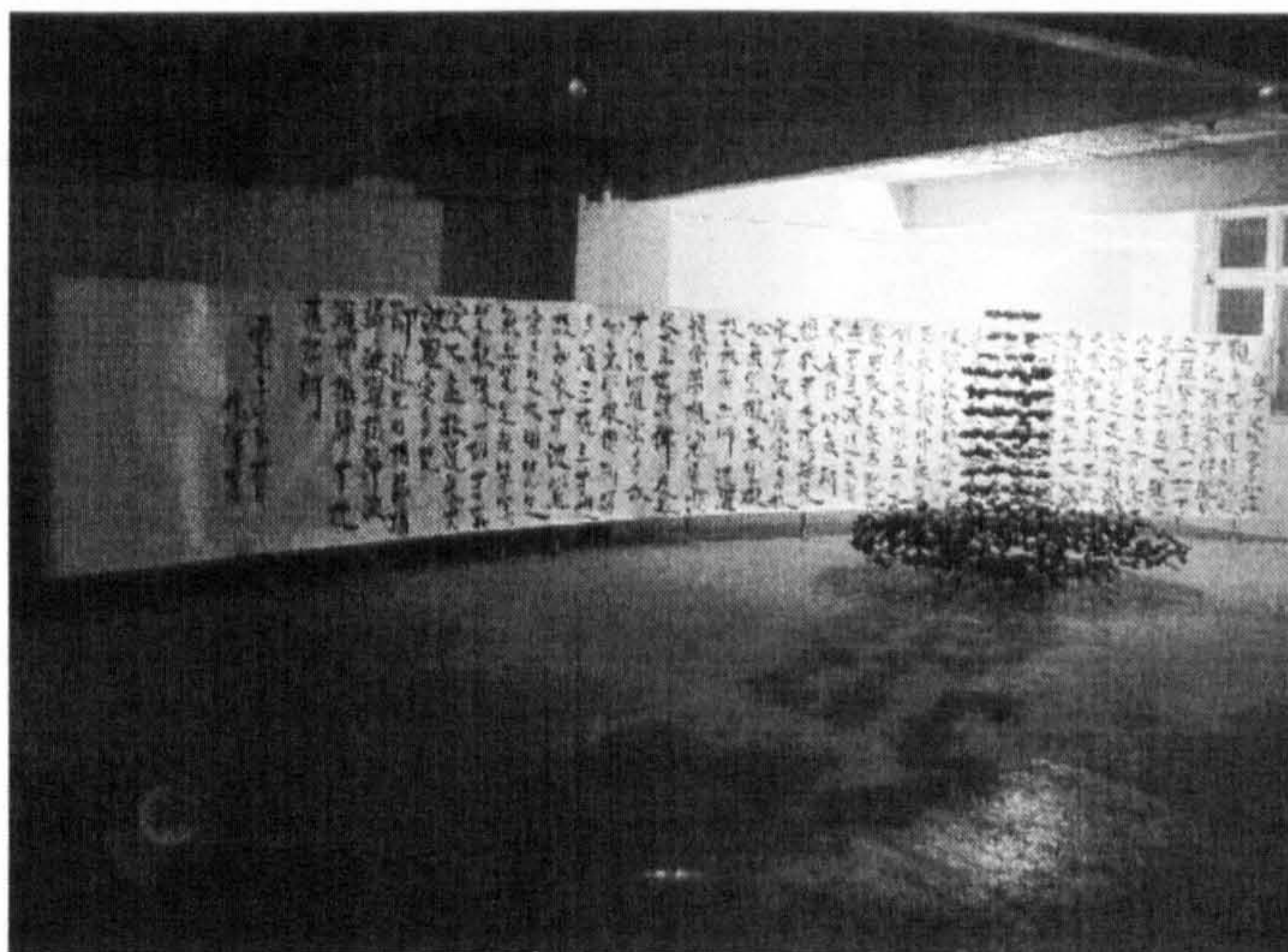
The process of making the human sized charcoal piece was a major job.

Installation

The whole project was constructed as two elements brought together. One was a 10 metres long hand-written scroll; the other one was a human sized charcoal sculpture. The charcoal was suspended from the ceiling and the bottom of the piece was 15 centimetres above the ground. As in the first project; I had to tie the charcoal

piece by piece. There was no way I could speed up the process but I was very clear about where I should start to work. The sculpture was a transformation of myself into a charcoal format in terms of height and size. I really enjoyed tying the charcoal. It was the only thing I was concentrating on whilst I worked. The notion of “Right Now” is always emphasised by *Ch'an*. When the “human” was finished, I was thinking about the “Galaxy” again. I wanted the circle to be 10 centimetres high and 3 – 4 metres in diameter. Another challenge for me was to tie the charcoal at the same height and also keep it in a round shape. The human form represented an image of purity arising from a muddy environment. The whole charcoal piece was finished in a three day working process.

Finally, the hand-written screen was installed behind the human scale charcoal.



The whole view of the installation in the evening.

Documentation

I was taking photographs of the work at several times between daytime and evening. The work was documented by digital images and black and white photographs. Please refer to illustrations.

Reflection

At the exhibition opening, the audience were standing around the human charcoal form; they observed the charcoal, discussed the work and explained their opinion. I was disappointed that there was not much discussion about the writing but more about the hanging charcoal piece. The charcoal brought them a sense of peace. The charcoal moved slightly in the wind or by the observer's movement. It returned to the static position when everything became quite.

The writing and charcoal did not integrate with each other very well in this project and environment. They were strong individually but some part of it worked as a group. The charcoal and writing elements were brought into this space and constructed but were not suited to the architectural environment in which they were placed. Without the ever-changing light to draw the calligraphy and charcoal together within the space they were separate.

Whilst I was taking photographs of the work several times around daytime and evening, I noticed the appearance and performance of the work was different at different times of day. The light effects on the charcoal sometimes produced long shadows.

I want to examine my notion of installation to orientate the environment within the space I am given. There was something missing in this project, perhaps the participation of the audience, at which I need to look at more carefully in the next project.

Installation works vary according to the site in which they are presented. An

installation can assist the observer in understanding a work's scale, historical connection and the site-specific transformation. I didn't make use of the local resources of the Chinese cooking industry to enrich the project. The scale of this project was small and not strong enough to bring the audience into the entirety of the objective matter/phenomenon and subjective matter/mind.

According to audience's opinions the phenomenon of quietness was successfully created and displayed in the space. I was concerned about the notion of *yi jing* not being described and presented strongly enough in this project. I did create a phenomenon of quietness and the audience was able to feel it, but they were not able to participate fully.

Conclusion

- This project has expanded an idea of a temporary relation between the audience and the artwork. The audience observed the work from the point of view of the human charcoal form. They were not able to enter into the space between the concentric circles of charcoal. The action of participating in the "Galaxy" was limited. The involvement of the audience therefore will need further consideration.

- The work only gives a feeling that I constructed the two elements in the space, and the unity of mankind and nature of the space were not within each other. Also it gave a sense that the work did not grow up within the space. The temporary testing of the situation between the architectural space and the artwork inspired me to re-consider how to create an artwork within a specific space.

- A site history research was necessary and was carried out before the project

started. I need to rethink about how to create a relationship between the work, the exhibition space and the connection of the Chinese culture in China Town and myself, as well as the interaction between the audience and the artwork.

Project 3

Yuan Juehui's Art

When: 15th - 18th March 2002

Where: "The Art of War and Emancipation" Exhibition, Orient City, Colindale, London



On space and time

The Heart Series

This project was part of a group exhibition focusing on the work of Chinese artists living in Britain.

Description

Yuan Juehui's art is a series of small, dark, circular objects arranged on a light-colored tiled floor.

The artist achieved a state of unity between his and his work brought into the contemporary art world and introduced the idea of a new way of a time in order to be formed the great work.

Project 5

Title: The Heart Series

When: 21st – 25th March 2001

Where: “The Self-Spacing and Transforming” Exhibition, Orient City, Colindale, London

Material: Charcoal

Aims:

The aim was first to continue the notion formed at the project of the Deep Ocean of the Heart.¹⁸¹ (Go back to first project the notion of Man and Nature) I was also intending to investigate the relationship between the artist and the public environment.

The installing of the work was part of the work, which would be shown in front of the audience. Through this action I wished to evaluate the relationship between the space and artist.

This project was part of a group exhibition focusing on the work of Chinese artists living in Britain.

Description:

¹⁸¹ The notion concerned a state of Unity between Man and Heaven brought into the contemporary living environment and concentrated the focus on one thing at a time in order to understand the great wisdom.

Site selection

I was invited by friends to join a group exhibition in an Oriental Shopping Mall which is located in the north of London. They contacted and explained to the manager the idea of promoting Chinese culture and artists, and to organize the show in the shopping mall.

The shopping mall has a wealth of Oriental culture. The shops major sale is Oriental food¹⁸² and goods.¹⁸³ The place attracts various audiences and that could help explore different interesting reactions towards the project. The space and the project would be very much connected to a contemporary life situation.

Two spaces were given us to install our work. (Talking about my space only, I was given a large space in the centre in the Shopping Mall) One was a wall space which was for the pictures and video work, the other was located in an open area with an artificial fish pool as a lobby in which my work was installed. The area divided the mall into two parts and is the connection to the supermarket and the shops.

A number of digital images of the space were sent to me beforehand to show where I may be able to create artwork. It was still very hard to gain a sense of the space and the surrounding environment. However, I had a



The shopping mall

sense that the large empty hall was the most suitable space for me to create my work.

¹⁸² Supermarket, coffee shop, food stores and restaurants.

¹⁸³ Book store, kitchenware store and travel agency.

The ground floor provided a vast space to create this project, and I would get much opportunity to attract various audiences to see the installing and completion of the artwork.

Date and time-scale

The opening date (20th of March) and exhibition period (21st – 25th of March) were arranged between the shopping mall manager and ourselves. We were given nearly three working days to set up our work. I set a timetable as follows: further site research – half day, development of form and preparation of materials – two days, installation – a day, removal – half day.

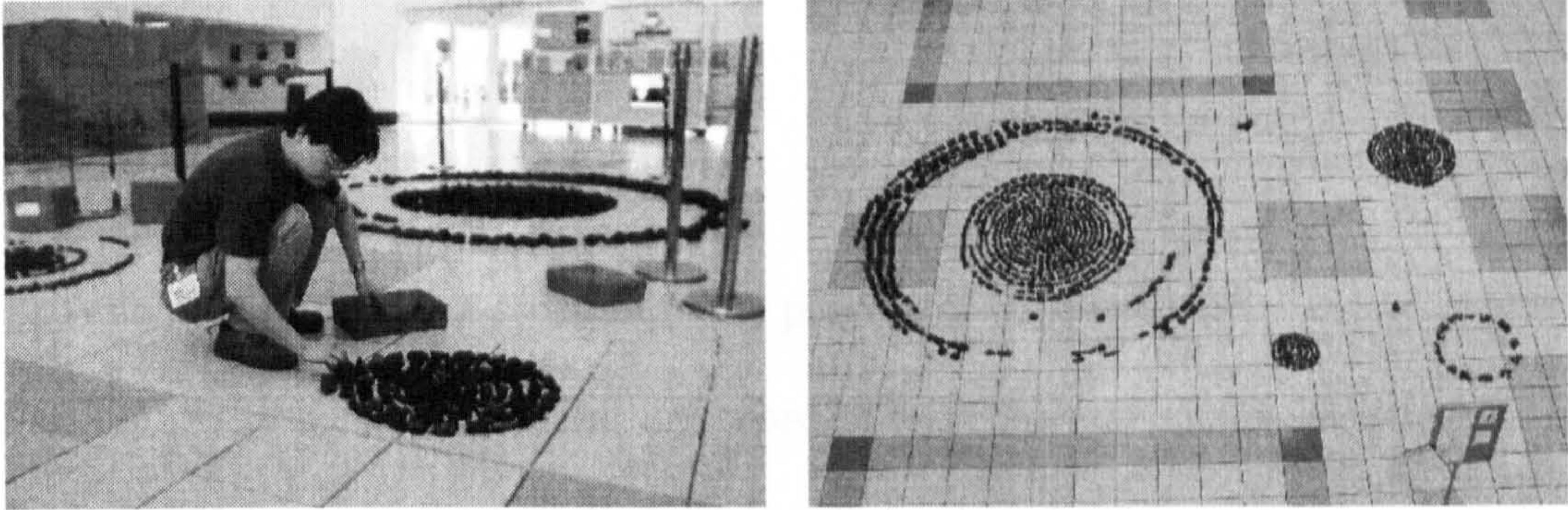
Project development

The materials were prepared before I travelled to London but I was not able to get a picture of what I was going to make in the space until I had actually been in the mall. The hall was about four-floors high. I was not able to attach anything from ceiling if I would like to create “*the Deep Ocean of the Heart*” again. What I could do was focused on the ground and so I created a piece of floor-based work.

I viewed the floor of the shopping mall as a vast water surface. The image of a Japanese *Ch'an* garden appeared in my mind. The concentric patterns of gravel and the symbolic circles occupied my thoughts for a little while; I was there to produce a phenomenon of my own interpretation of a *Ch'an* garden.

The “water” surface was very quiet before I started to install the charcoal. I placed many pieces of charcoal into differing diameters of concentric circles in the mall. One of them was similar to the biggest circle in the Deep Ocean of Heart. It

was a demanding job to keep all of the circles round purely by eye.



Left: the work in progress. Right: a view of the installation from above.

The organization of placing the charcoal was as if there were a few different sizes of stones dropped spontaneously into the water and creating ripples. The impact on the surface of the water created different sizes of ripples to present different moments in time.

Blue and cream square tiles made the floor. Two geometric patterns (the charcoal circles and the square tiles) were observable from the upper floor.

Installation

The work was completed in the space and it took me a whole afternoon to install. The action of placing charcoal was visible to the public. A main charcoal circle was created on one side of the ground floor first then I had a short break to decide where and what kind of form I would use to make other circle. A number of small charcoal circles were placed into different areas but I tried to build a strong relationship with the main circle.

Documentation

The work was documented by digital images, black and white photographs,

please refer to illustration.

Reflection

A number of thoughts arose from the process of the installation, and specifically from the performance of placing the charcoal with the audience's interruption and discussion.

This project came out differently from my original plan, which was for the work to be similar to my first project (*the Deep Ocean of the Heart*). My second plan caused the project to be created in a short time. The space and situation inspired me to change my idea of how to compose this work.

This was an interesting opportunity in that I was able to have a live performance in front of the audience in a shopping centre environment. The audience stood nearby and watched me positioning the charcoal. Sometimes, the performance was disturbed by people passing. This creation and interruption were happening at the same time. I spent time discussing with, and answering the questions of the audience. They asked many different questions, such as, "*Why have you placed the charcoal in the hall?*" Or "*What is the relationship between the charcoal and the ground?*" A Japanese manager asked me why I was placing charcoal randomly and not one piece next to another. I changed my direction of placing charcoal, and he thought that I had lost my concentration. I did not have any intention of choosing a particular direction of placing charcoal. I just wanted to create the image from my mind.

The discussions with the audience affected my creation because I kept standing up to communicate with the audience. I was aware that this interruption would affect

my work, but it was a part of the creative process of working in the 'real' space. I would describe it as the real peace that arises from the heart, so outside interruption cannot affect the peaceful mind.

It was also very interesting to watch the children play with the charcoal. They touched the charcoal and would like to find out what the black object was. A small piece of charcoal was picked up and placed beside another by a small boy. The children seemed to be more inquisitive of the environment than the adults. What makes adults change or lose the ability to be curious?

The whole piece seemed to become two-dimensional and had integrated to become a pattern with the tiles on the ground. It was also interesting to view the concentric circles having merged with the square tiles in a geometric format.

An image I once saw, whilst I visited a Japanese *Ch'an* temple, a Japanese gardener bending his body and trimming the leaves of the bushes. The gardener was doing a simple job (trimming the leaves) to keep the shape of the bushes. The action was so simple but it needs time and concentration that was passed down by different generations to perform this task. The unity of action and spirit occurred to me. The spiritual was connected to the performance of writing Heart Sutra.

I learnt the essential of "doing one thing at a time" as I was placing the charcoal. This gave me some inspirations for further projects.

Conclusion

- The consideration of spatial form in this project inspired me to think of how to work with a specific space. This project also provided me with a good chance to

use a different form to create my work.

- I also learnt to create a new piece of work by using the same materials but transform them by using different presentation.

- This project mainly focused on my own performance, the process of placing work and the result of display. Audience observation was from a distance and the audience's participation with the artwork was limited. The audience did not get much opportunity to involve themselves in the artwork apart from asking me questions. I did get some audience involvement whilst I was placing charcoal, such as the children playing with the charcoal, which also happened in Newcastle Central train station.

- The project enabled me to expand my concept of creating an artwork in another public space. The difference between "*the Deep Ocean of the Heart*" and this project was that the environment had changed from a station to a shopping mall. The work is similar and the meaning appeared with different consequences and results. The architectural styles of building and the spatial environment were different too. It seems quite extraordinary that the meaning of the spatial environment and the artwork have been transformed into a different language. The function of the space has changed.

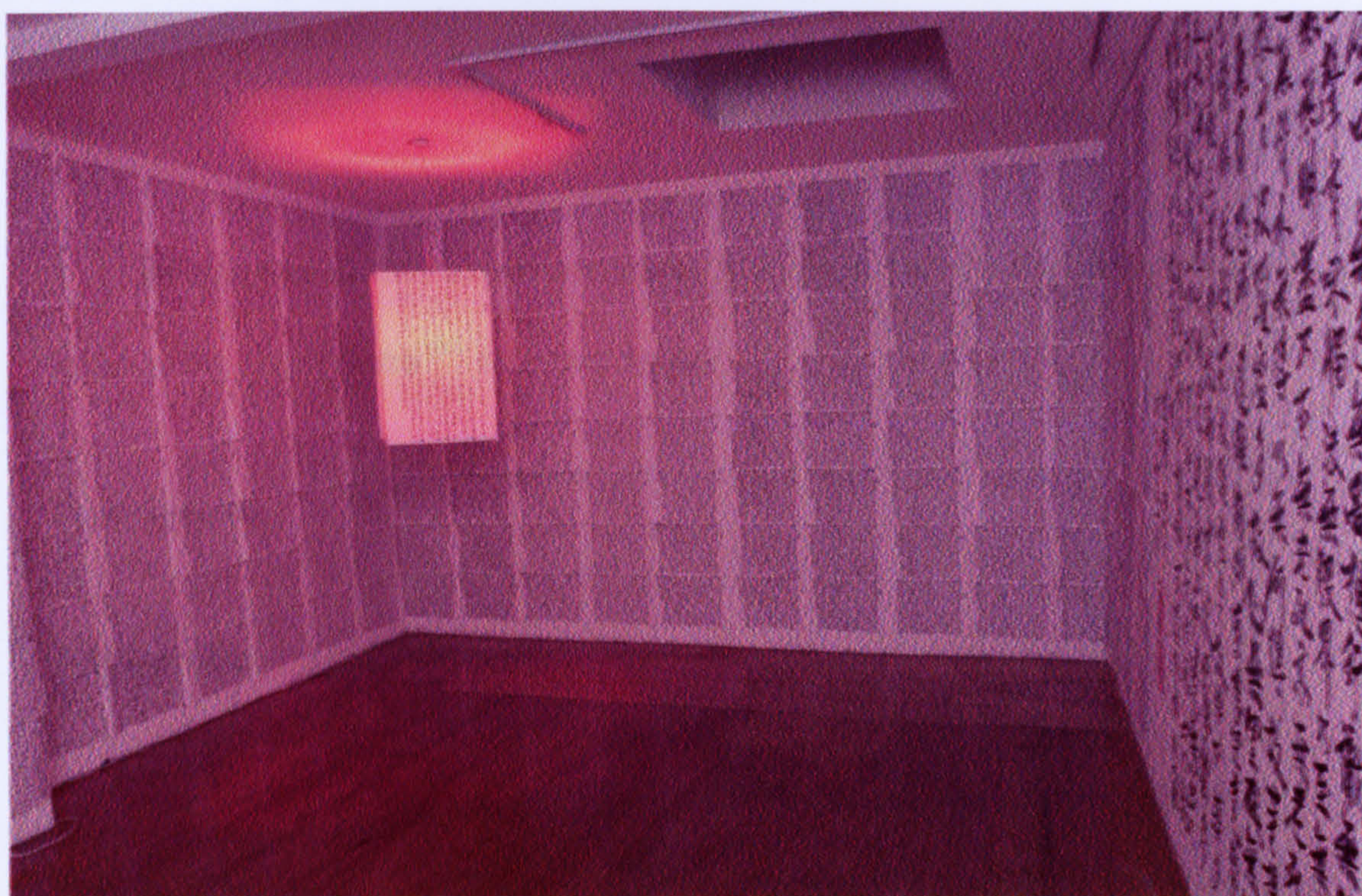
Project 6

Title: Mind to Mind

When: 5th May - 2nd June 2001, Globe Gallery

Where: Globe Gallery, North Shields, Newcastle upon Tyne

Material: 304 pages of Heart Sutra writings, Paper Lantern, Chinese ink, Acrylic



gallery director. We were given **Mind to Mind** all the works. I chose the end of the gallery as my exhibition space and asked the director to add a partition wall. Therefore, I had an entirely enclosed space for my own installation.

Dates and Locations

The Globe gallery had already decided the date of 5th May - 2nd June 2001 for

Project 6

Title: Mind to Mind

When: 5th May – 2nd June 2001, Globe Gallery

Where: Globe Gallery, North Shields, Newcastle upon Tyne

Material: 304 pages of Heart Sutra writings, Paper Lantern, Chinese ink, Acrylic

Aims:

The aim was further experimentation, to explore the site and also to transfer and relocate the Heart Sutra¹⁸⁴ to a new space.

Description:

Site selection

I was selected to join the “*Pure*” Exhibition in the Globe gallery at North Shields. The space was allocated with an agreement between all the artists and the gallery director. We were given a week to install the works. I chose the end of the gallery as my exhibition space and asked the director to add a partition wall. Therefore, I had an entirely enclosed space for my own installation.

Date and time-scale

The Globe gallery had already decided the date of 5th May – 2nd June 2001 for

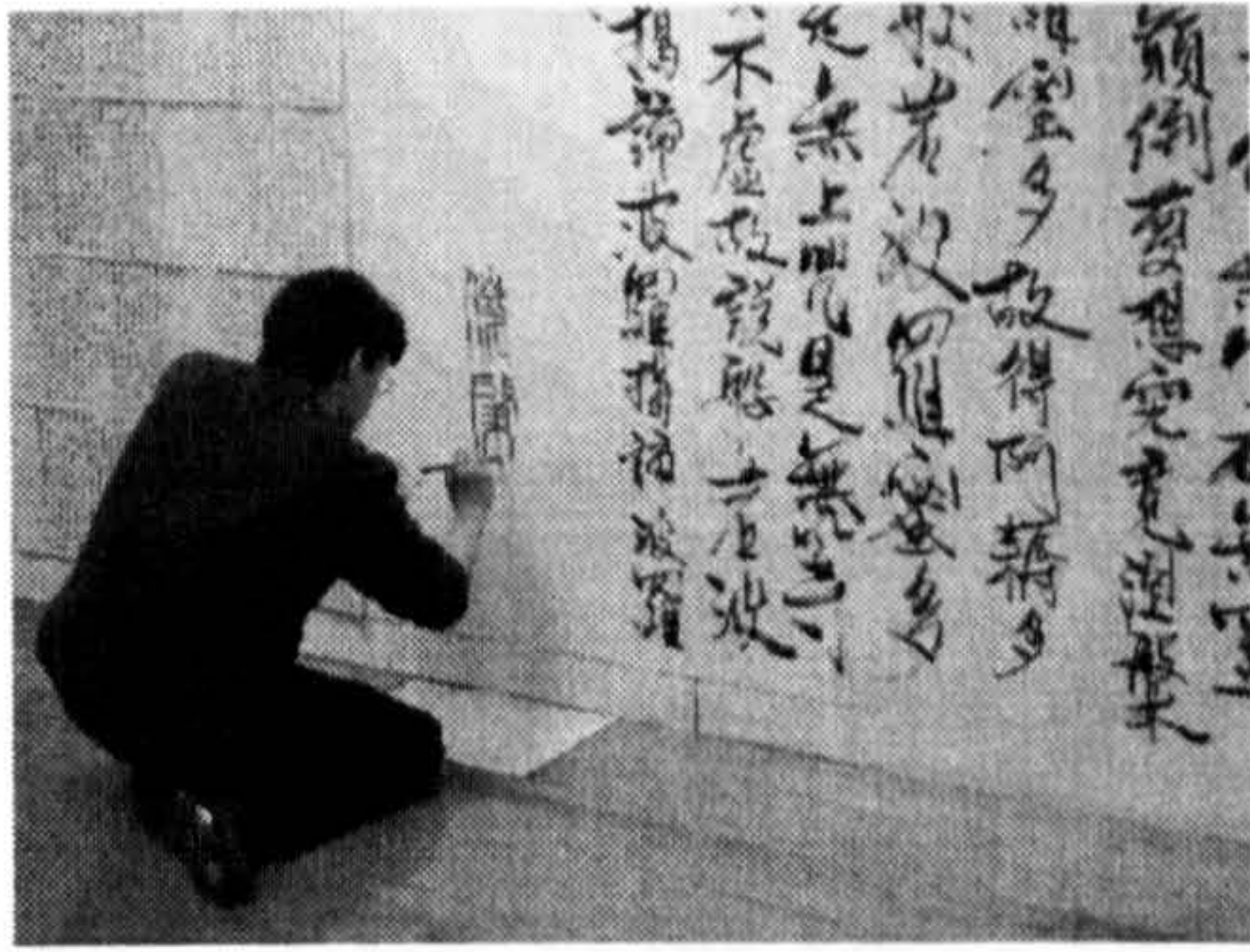
¹⁸⁴ Please refer to project 3

the exhibition. There was a week for artists to set up the artwork. I set a timetable as follows: further site research – half day, development of form and preparation of materials – four days, installation three half days, display and documentation – two half working days, removal – half day.

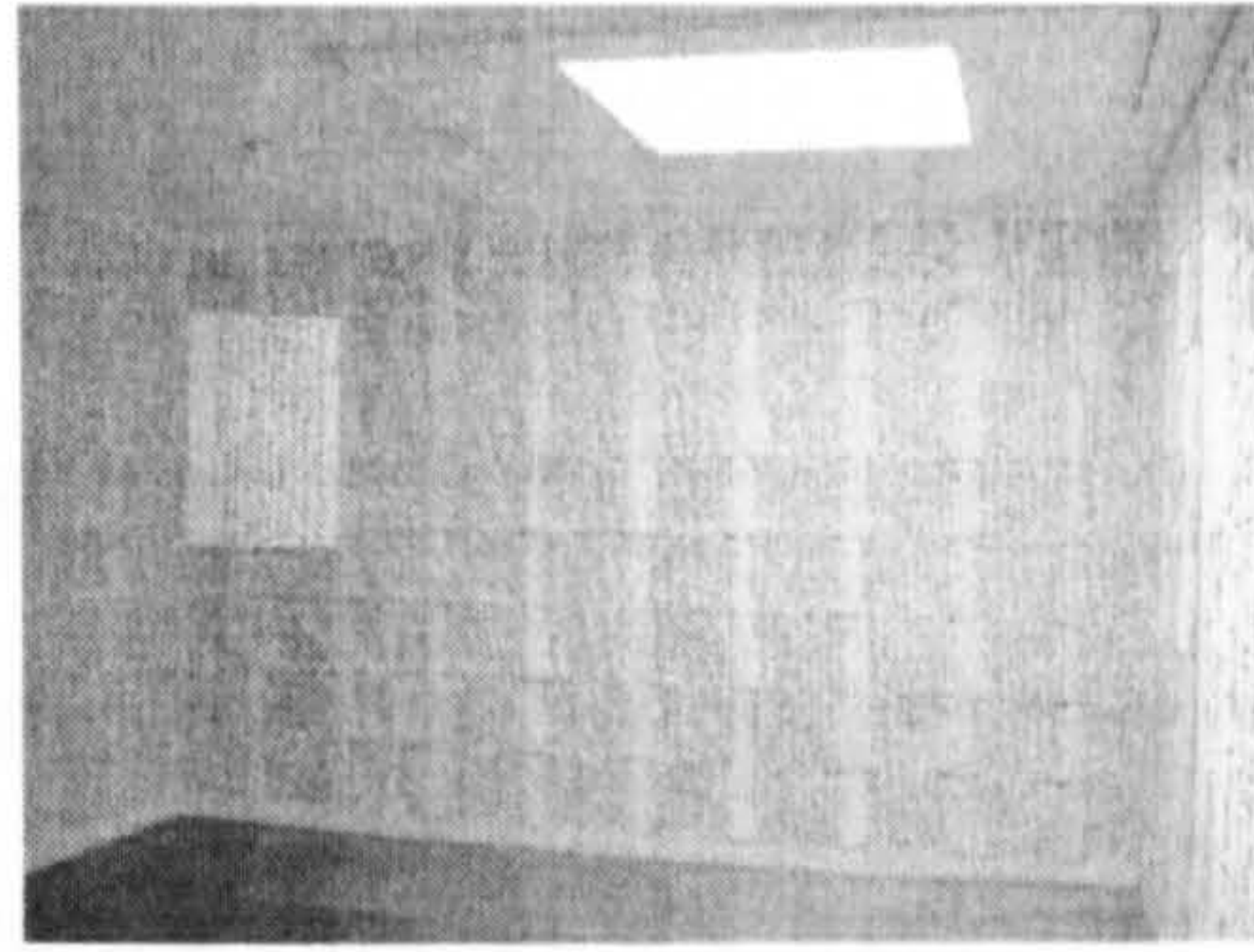
Project development

I started by looking at my *Heart Sutra* project, and I intended to bring this form to the project. To create an installation with Sutra writings was what I proposed in my application form. The Heart Sutra writings in the studio were moved to the gallery space where they produced a different atmospheric feeling. The gallery space was larger than the studio and with a shining wooden floor. Those writings were not enough to cover the walls in the gallery. I spent three days to write more than 100 pages of Heart Sutra and attached them to the wall, (This is compared with the 200 pages I had done in the past) and this was as much as I could produce in three working days. There were 304 pages of Sutra writings in total. I did not have sufficient time left for me to write more Sutra for the space on the last wall. A decision was made to write a piece of Sutra with my own red signature on the side of the wall directly.

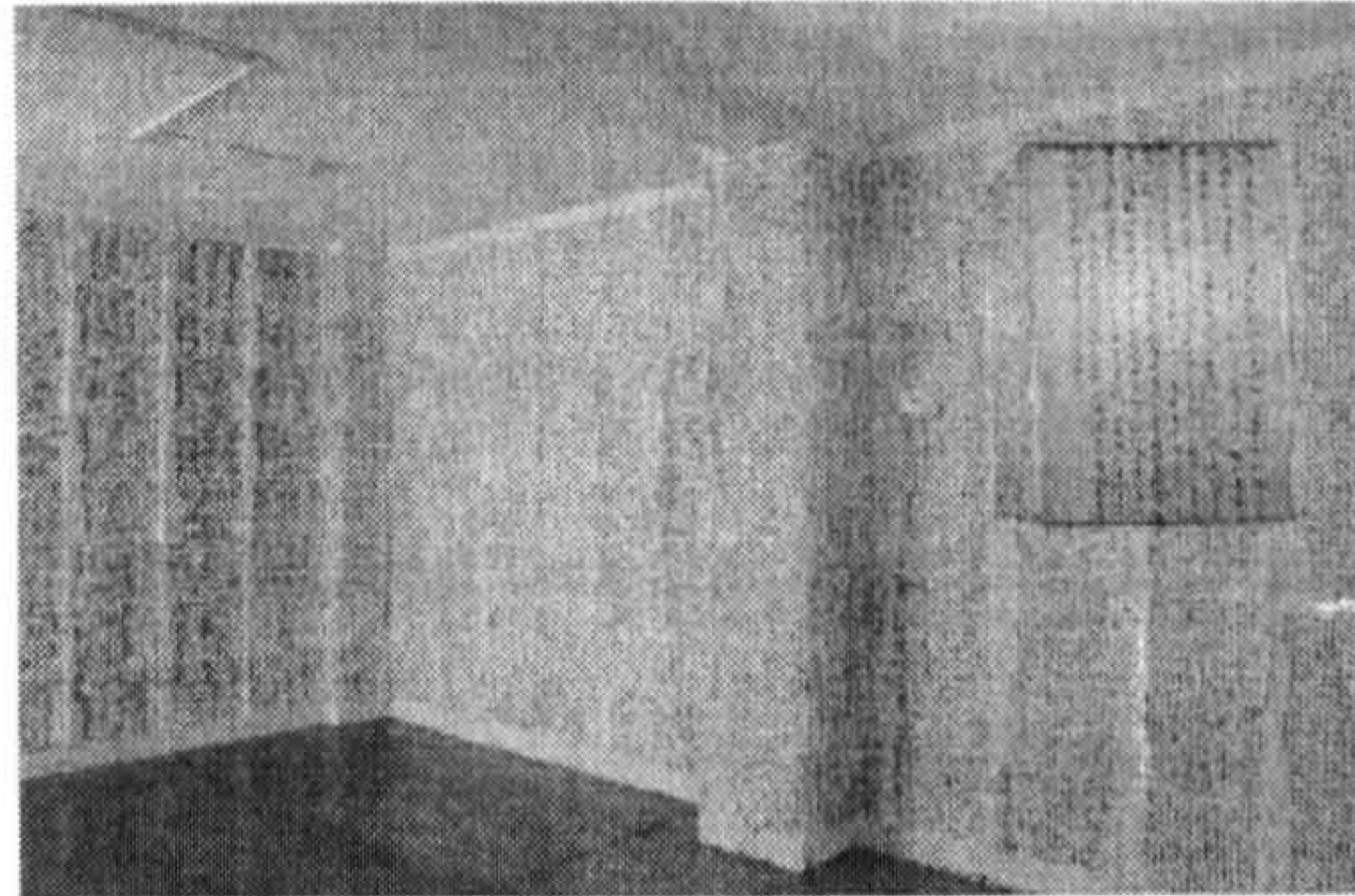
I intended to integrate with the space more than the environment in my studio. I also made the lantern a script piece by joining four pieces of writing and there was a red light in the middle to symbolise a warm heart and create a poetic atmosphere. This lantern was executed upon rice paper and was placed at the side of the gallery. The rice paper has its own special translucent surface. The sky-light window was blocked out and the whole space became dim with only the red lantern illuminating the space.



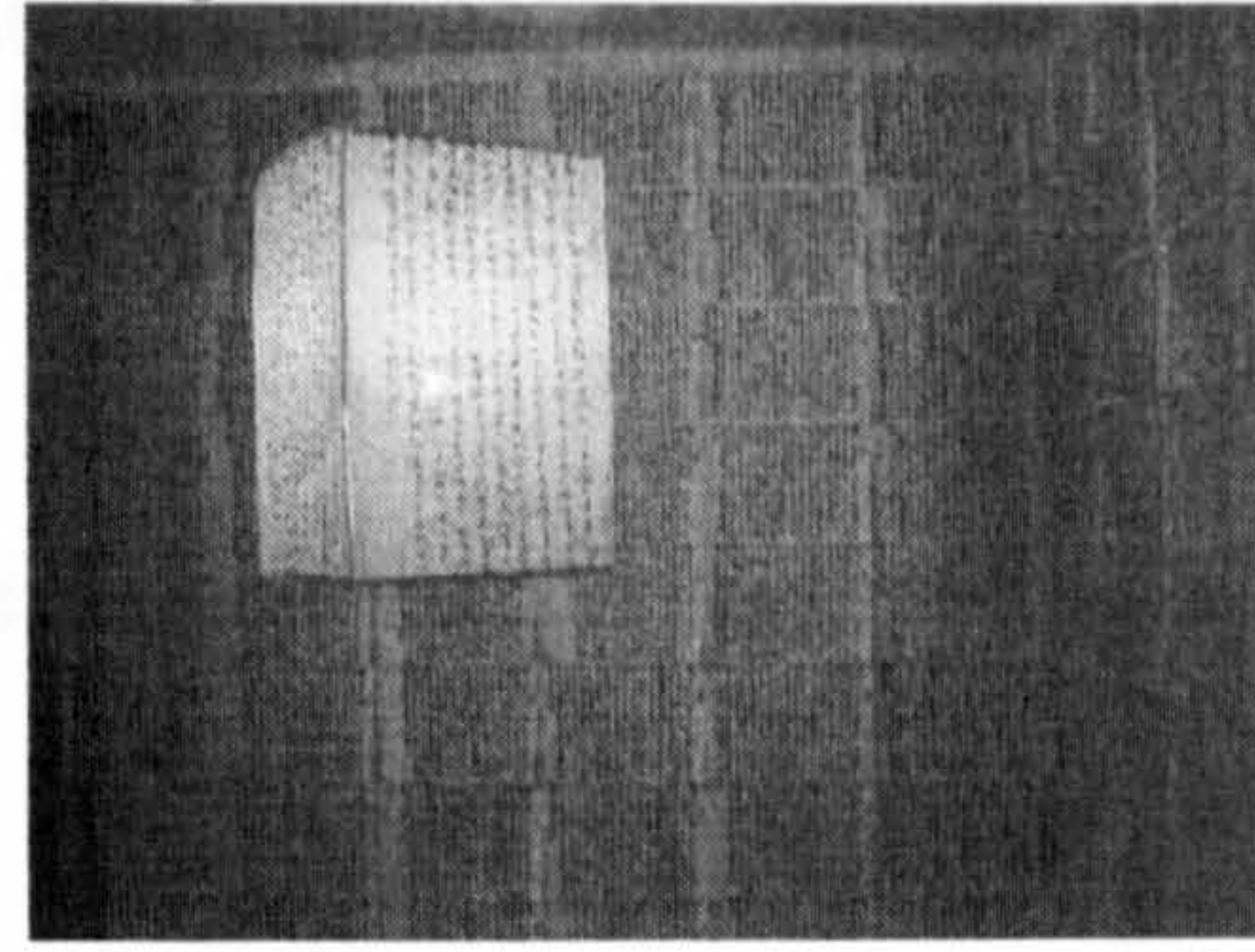
Completing the calligraphy



The installation before covering the skylight



The whole installation



Detail of the lantern

Installation

The work was not completed and installed at once. I started to attach the writings on the facing wall (which was the first one as you walked into the space) and then continued to cover all of the other two walls. I had to stop the installation after two days as I had attached all the writings which I had brought from the studio. I had three days away from the installation in order to write more pages of Sutra. The time for installing the work was limited and there was a wall space still left for me to cover with the writings. A piece of writing with my red signature was written directly onto the wall. A roof window was blocked out in order to allow the paper lantern illumination to be effective.

Documentation

The work was documented by digital images. Please refer to illustrations.

Reflection

A number of ideas arose from the project both in terms of practical realisation and content. Some were identified through reflection during the making and installation of the work, others through consideration of the work following its completion and the audience's participation and discussion.

The audience enjoyed walking through the space to observe the environment and appreciated the sensational feeling of peace and calm. In open discussion with some visitors about the site, they described that the specific space as a meditative environment. Some of them would like to sit on the floor or chair to feel the sensation and meditate in the surroundings.

The physical temperature of the experimental space was cooler than elsewhere in the gallery. It seemed to go well with the presentation of the artwork. The light situation worked together with the writing and presented the project as a different phenomenon from the previous project, which was made in the studio. The atmosphere was changed by the light condition, temperature and the location, all of which drew the observer towards a spiritual response, that was interesting for them to explore.

This project has created an *yi jing* of a calm and peaceful atmosphere, which was my intention in the previous project "Heart Sutra". The highest achievement of *yi jing* is to create the highest standard of phenomenon without any language or verbal description. I would describe that as "a phenomenon of poetic pictureiness". The site has been moved from studio to public gallery space. The context of time and space has changed and that influenced the work's presentation. This work also

created a different sensation from the “*Heart Sutra*” project. The red light gave the project a different elemental “feel”. The directly produced writing would also provided a good metaphor – the artist’s inner sense is reflected outwardly on a wall. The new elements of light, colour and the location’s temperature led some of the audience to describe it as a calm and meditative space.

Conclusion:

This psycho-physiological situation existed at the same time and in the same environment. The audience experienced the experimental space which I created for them. They took time to observe and experience the environment. A psycho-physiological experimental work. This was a starting point to inspire me to create more opportunities for my audience’s involvement with artwork.

- Ever-changing phenomena stimulates the artist’s mind and the artist then creates phenomena from his subjective mind. The audience then perceives the artist’s stimulation from observing or experiencing these subjective phenomena and are inspired.

- This work brought me to contemplate works that could create a symbiotic relationship between the audience and myself. Those pieces of writing became a reflection of my inner state of self-consciousness and created a presentation of my emotion to the public. My feelings, mental situation, physical involvement and a sense of being were truly presented in front of the audience.

- Through the reaction between colour and the atmosphere the space seems to have become a spiritual chamber space. The installation and the rest of the space

have created a transcendence of the connection of material and immaterial. The physical objects and the environment produced the appearance of immaterial mind, which would be a spiritual contact experience.

- An installation work could be created in one site but replaced in another site-specific place. The meaning of the work, the date and the title may change as well by this new location. As Anya Gallaccio described *“its general character, the materials from which it is constructed, the use to which it has previously been put.”*¹⁸⁵ This project was created in a studio space previously and recreated into a gallery context. As a result a change of space alters the meaning of the work. The effect of the space changed the final production of the work and presented a different result. There were several things added to the gallery’s space such as the lantern, more than 100 pages of extra writings and the direct writing was specially created for the gallery space.

- As *“the gallery, could be thought of as a community meeting space, a place where a community could be formed, where a community could be called to order, called to a particular purpose.”*¹⁸⁶ The action of writing for me is a connection to communicate with my essential nature and *Ch’an* Buddhism philosophy of history. The gallery became a space for the work and the contemporary community to communicate with each other. As I wrote in my own statement *“the observer is invited to open their heart and is free to interpret the work and experience the atmosphere of calm, importantly engendered by being in the space...”*. The *“Mind to Mind”* project was conceived to invite the observer to enter

¹⁸⁵ P. 35, Installation Art, Nicolas de Oliveira, Nicola Oxley, Michael Petry, Thames and Hudson Ltd, London, 1998

¹⁸⁶ P. 35, Installation Art, Nicolas de Oliveira, Nicola Oxley, Michael Petry, Thames and Hudson Ltd, London, 1998

the *yi jing* which I intended to create.

Project 7

Title: Heart Sutra (Heart to Heart, Mind to Mind)

When: 1st May - 17th July 2001

Where: Chinese Arts Centre, Manchester



Heart Sutra (Heart to Heart, Mind to Mind)

The whole project was also trying to use traditional Chinese calligraphy as a tool to create a temporary installation in a contemporary gallery space. To use the Chinese aesthetic theory as a cultural background to create an artwork link with the contemporary installation concept such as use of audience, spatial arrangement and the relationship between the audience and the work.

Description:

Project 7

Title: Heart Sutra (Heart to Heart, Mind to Mind)

When: 7th May - 13th July 2001

Where: Chinese Arts Centre, Manchester

Materials: Rice paper, Chinese ink, Blue tack, 6 Muslin panels

Aims:

The whole project was aiming to show evidence of my “self” existence by writing the Heart Sutra and exemplifying this as a live performance art. The intention was to express the artist’s spirituality and also to examine the relationship between the observer and the artist’s performance.

In the investigation of this project I wished to draw the attention of the presence of the audience, which could bring a completion to the work. The artwork and the whole gallery space would be unified with the attendance and participation of the observer.

The whole project was also trying to use traditional Chinese calligraphy as a tool to create a temporary installation in a contemporary gallery space. To use the Chinese aesthetic theory as a cultural background to create an artwork link with the contemporary installation concept such as use of materials, spatial environment and the relationship between the audience and the work.

Description:

Site selection

I was selected for an opportunity to have a solo show in the Chinese Arts Centre in Manchester. The Centre holds annual competitions for contemporary artists who are resident in Britain for a three year programme “*the New Commissions scheme*”. It provided an opportunity for four or five Chinese artists to show their work in the gallery for two months each year.

The gallery combined two spaces with an arch between them. It was refurbished with a wooden floor and had three large windows on three sides of the building. Two windows facing the main street and one on a small side path. The audience could view the whole gallery from the outside windows.

A site study was needed. Some photographs were taken in order to develop the artwork and plan how much material I would use for the project.

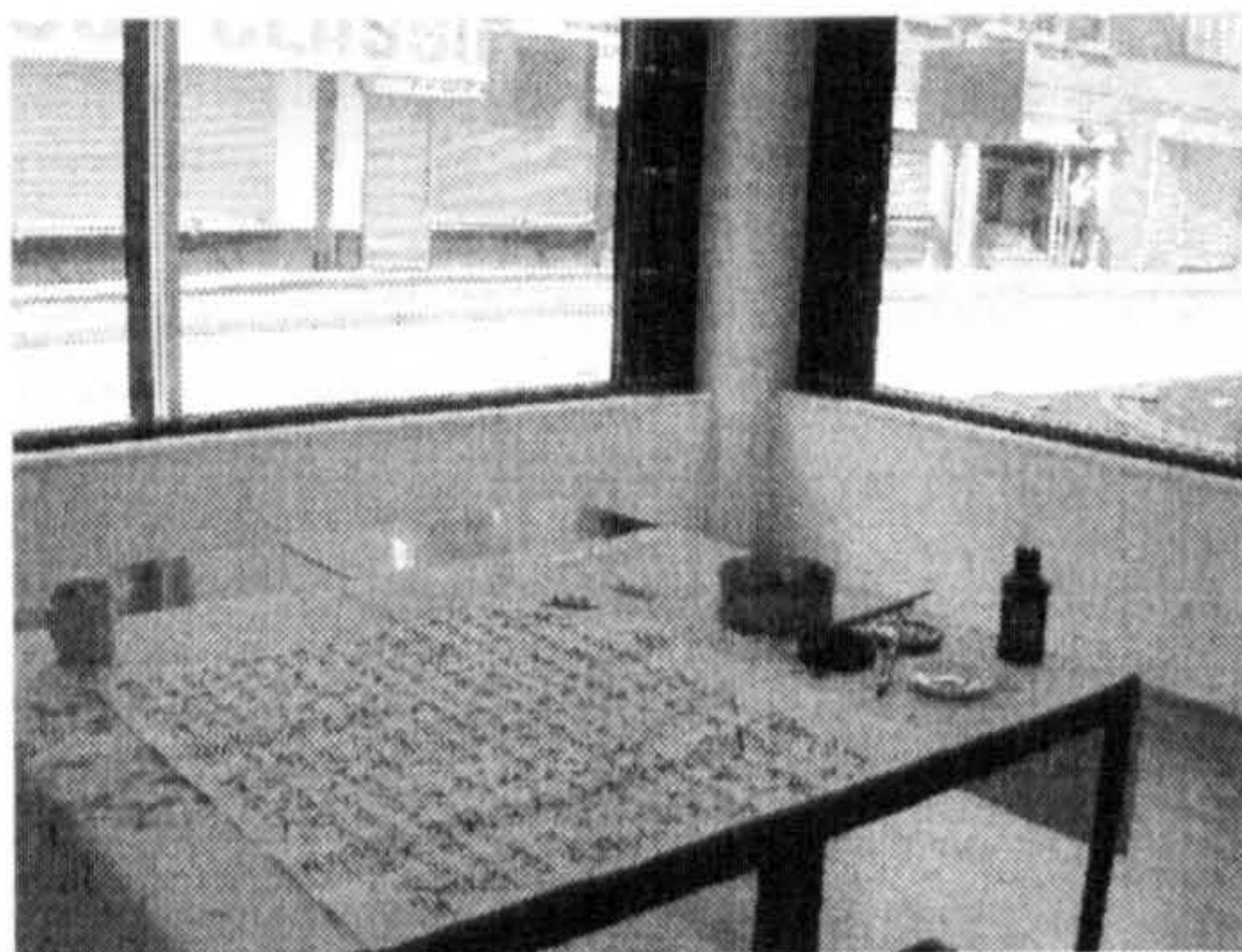
Date and time-scale

The dates of 7th May to 13th July were decided in consultation with the arts coordinator at the Chinese Arts Centre and under his instruction the commitments to prepare and install the work. I set a timetable which was already proposed and discussed in my earlier application as follows: site research – one day additional visiting and discussion with the art coordinator; artist in residence – two weeks; development of an idea (since there is gap of nine months from selection to commencement) – nine months; preparation of materials – two weeks; display and documentation – two weeks during the residence period; removal and repaint the space – four days.

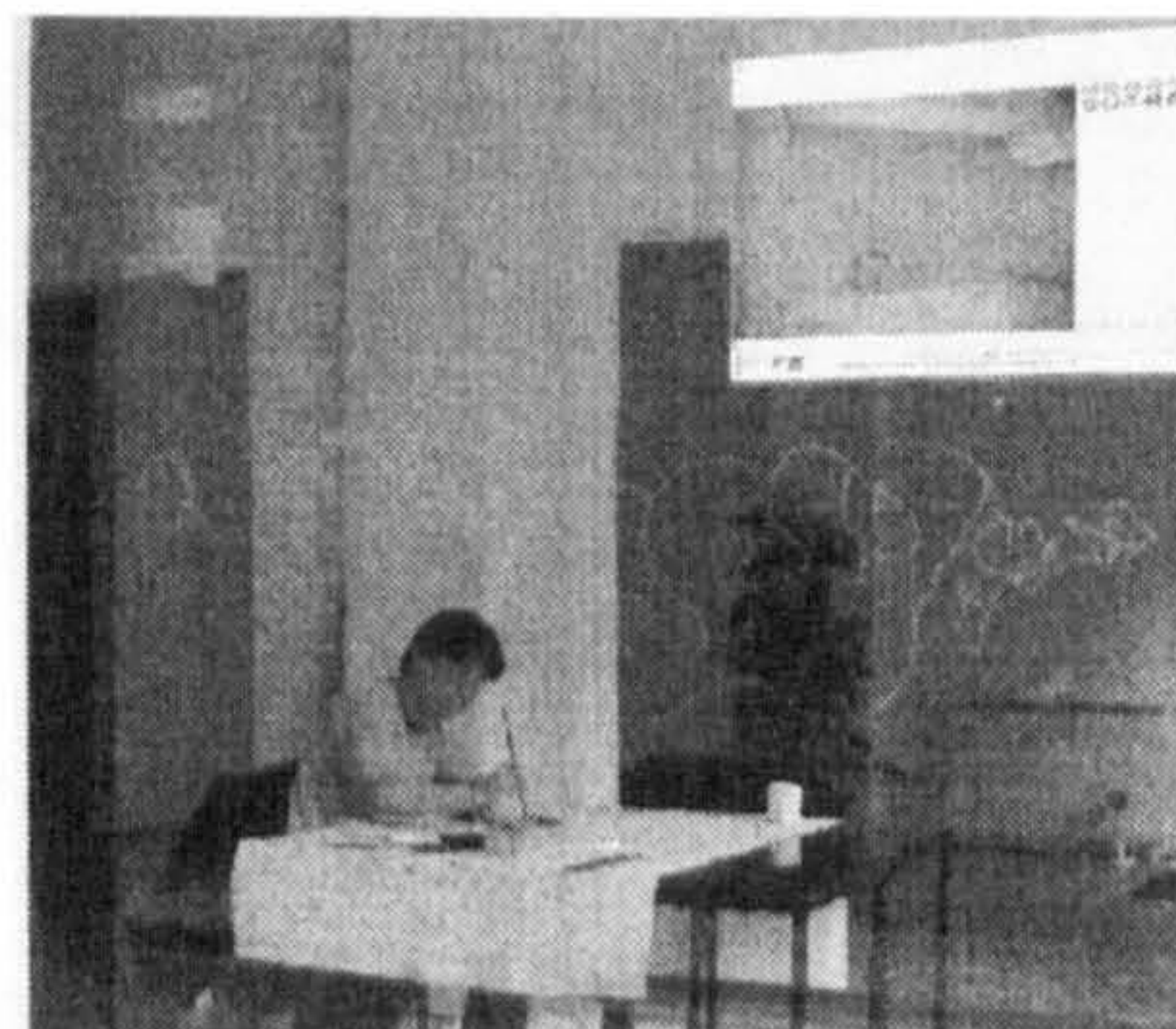
Project development

The application for this exhibition contained a proposition to examine and recreate the experimental project from the studio into the contemporary gallery space. I proposed to write the Heart Sutra on rice paper as a performance, and stick them on the walls in public performance in the gallery as an artist in residence for two weeks. Each leaf was stuck on the walls immediately it was finished until all the available wall space was covered with the leaves. The rice paper and the Sutra writing contained the meaning of traditional Chinese culture. The performance was conceived as a contemporary presentation. The display was the result of what I have experienced in the space. After two weeks of writing performance, I wished to take all the tools away and leave the space empty but keep the writings on the walls.

At first, I was sitting in the gallery and repeating the Heart Sutra on a sheet of rice paper for a week. I hung it up from ceiling to floor. The construction of it was very difficult and the blue tack/adhesive was too obviously seen from the street. After a few experiments I was still unable to find the best solution. The engagement of the artwork with the space was reviewed.



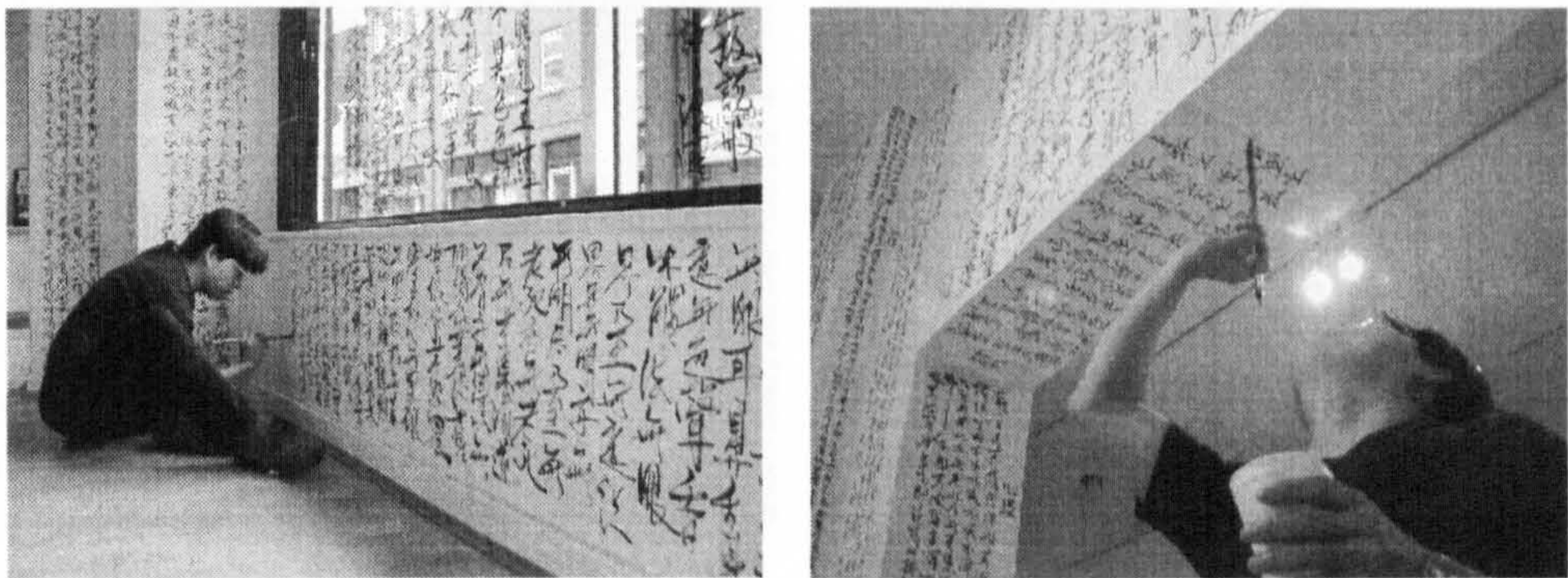
Working space



Working process- writing calligraphy

Consequently I decided to write the sutra on the wall directly in the gallery after

discussion with the arts coordinator and director of the gallery.¹⁸⁷ Permission was granted and the action of writing changed from writing on paper into an entirely live performance. The spatial engagement changed and the nature of the final presentation was different from the artwork in the studio.



Working process - writing calligraphy directly on the walls in the gallery

I also wished to engage the space more. I made a trial experiment firstly to write calligraphy on muslin, which I decided for the exhibition. I constructed two concentric layers of six muslin panels in order to create a spatial engagement for the audience.

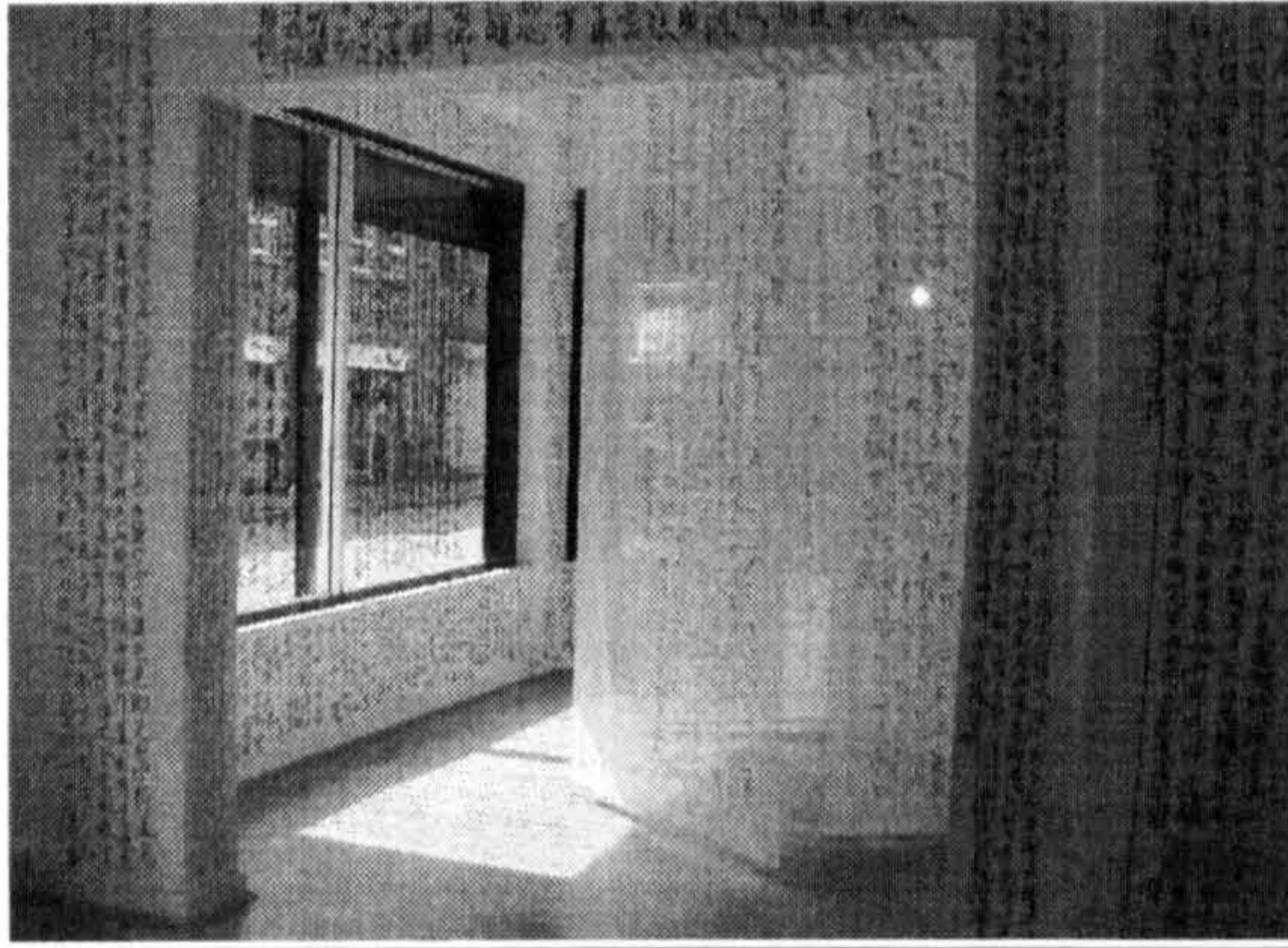
Installation

The work came out as a different result from the previous planned concept. The work took four days from early morning until late evening to write the Sutra directly onto the walls. The writing covered most of the gallery's spaces but I intended to leave some areas for "breathing". The audience watched me doing this performance and saw that the Sutra was growing from a single corner to cover most of the space. This project was created by half performance and half installation.

The space was divided in two. Six Sutra muslin panels were installed into two concentric circles and suspended from the ceiling in one side of the gallery. There

¹⁸⁷ I was confident this would work from my previous experience at the Globe Gallery.

was a light installed in the middle of the circle to symbolize the meaning of our heart. The observer was invited to participate with the project by walking around the muslin panels.



The whole installation



Audience participation in the installation

Documentation

The work was documented by digital images, please refer to illustrations.

Reflection:

There were a few issues arising from the project both in terms of practical realisation and content. They were identified through reflection during the processing of the installation of the work and discussion with the audience.

Writing calligraphy is no longer a means of illustrating or presenting a scene, but a true act of art. My calligraphy writing was not used in a literary sense. It became an illustration of the expressive gesture in the material and the meditation of repetitive performance. I showed the artwork was not just the history of the Sutra, but also my own live performance of “writing” within a formal installation. This demonstrates the context of the live performance on my emotional response and effect upon the human condition.

The action of direct writing inspired me to have a different relationship with the space. This experience was different from what I have done in my own studio. I really became a part of the space and the space became a part of me. There was a unity of the subjective (my intention) and the objective (the gallery space) presented by the action of writing directly upon the walls. I viewed the whole space as being constructed of many different small spaces/walls. I saw the single space and also viewed the entire gallery as one. All the materials I brought in were intended to create a work within the space and the spatial engagement in the gallery would be viewed as a whole event.

The relationship between the observer and myself was connected by the writing performance. Observers passing by the windows watched me writing the Sutra spontaneously. Some of them stood outside and discussed my work with each other. The distance of interconnection was just a window away. Some of them came into the gallery to look at the writing on the walls, and find their own interpretation and participate in the work.

*“The essence of installation art is spectator participation”.*¹⁸⁸ The observer is invited to walk through the space and interpret from what is in the space. An observer’s integration with the work would also complete and bring a conclusion to the work. I have created a phenomenon of *yi jing* and invited the observer into the environment to sense my emotional creation. How could one approach the *yi jing*, which I created in this project? It depends upon the person’s experience, disposition and accomplishment in art and their own life experience. The artwork will be thought of as being completed in its conception and understanding by the observer.

¹⁸⁸ P. xiii, *From Margin to Centre, the Space of Installation art*, Julie H. Reiss, the MIT Press Cambridge, London, 1999

Therefore, a performance could be part of installation practice. My own performance of writing within an installation demonstrated not only my personal spiritual phenomenon but presented the material's gesture and the architectural environment as well. A connection was made between the observer and myself when he/she integrated into my performance.

The two spaces in the gallery were viewed as a whole environment. *"the artist treats an entire indoor space (large enough for people to enter) as a single situation, rather than as a gallery for displaying separate works."*¹⁸⁹ When we experience Chinese garden design this brings the observer towards appreciating the aesthetic beauty of *yi jing* in a limited space. The concept is as big as the relationship between the garden and the cosmos and also as small as the relationship between man and the garden.

Direct writing made me think of the artistic expressions of the simple drawings in the Lascaux and Altamira caves in France; the religious paintings in the Tunhwang cave in China and the calligraphy of famous scenery in China. I was going back to those times and tracing those great artistic creations that presented a record of life's events and the artists' own emotional expressions of that period of time. A space full of writings conceptualised a similarity with those ancient histories but without their permanency. I would call this is a visualisation in a modern situation.

Conclusion:

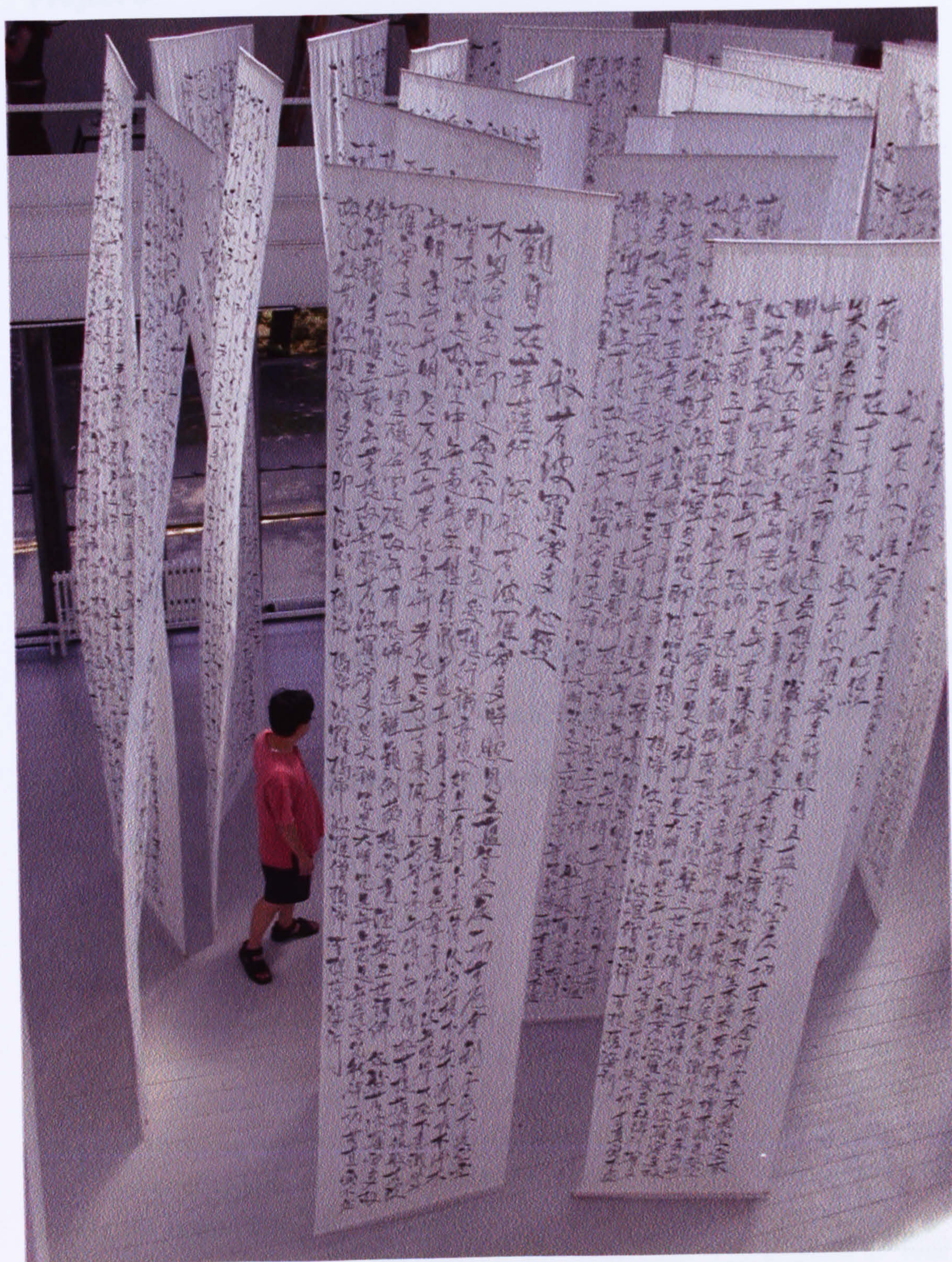
¹⁸⁹ P. xiii, *From Margin to Centre, the Space of Installation art*, Julie H. Reiss, the MIT Press Cambridge, London, 1999

- The performance of writing showed the evidence of my, “self” existence by exemplifying this as a live performance art.

- The experimental space was created within the images of Eastern cultural influences. The whole project used traditional Chinese calligraphy as a tool to create a temporary installation in a contemporary gallery space. The material is commonly used in traditional and modern Chinese history. Chinese aesthetic theories however have become a rich source of cultural background and create an artwork link with the contemporary installation concept.

- The Chinese Arts Centre sustains a very strong relationship with Chinese culture. The Centre is a normal exhibition space but also has a multifunction purpose. It has its own locality and individual identity as a place to promote the Chinese arts. The cultural background provides various aesthetic themes and theories.

- The relationship between the observer and myself was connected by the process of installing. Interruption from the audience brought me into the “front line” to face different live situations. The artwork and the whole gallery space were unified with the presence of the observer. The audience’s involvement and participation helped the creation towards completion. My invitation has brought them into the artwork, which has been created from an Oriental cultural background.



Looking for the "Moon"

Project 8

Title: Looking for the “Moon”,¹⁹⁰

When: 6th – 20th July 2001

Where: University of Newcastle upon Tyne,

Materials: Chinese ink, 32 Muslin panels

Aims:

The aim of the project was to employ a larger scale installation to investigate the relationship between the material and immaterial. It would also test the idea of the connection of the internal and external world. Moreover, this work was intended to concentrate upon the audience movement, observation and participation with the muslin panels.

Description:

¹⁹⁰ In the *Ch'an* tradition, the ultimate truth is sometimes compared to the moon, and the conventional truth to a finger pointing at the moon. Someone seeing the moon points in order to show it to people who haven't seen it yet. If they look at the finger, not the moon, they are not getting it. The finger is not the moon. Words, language, ideas and concepts are like the finger; they can express only the secondary truth, but they can point to the ultimate truth. (P. 21, *Subtle wisdom*, Master Sheng-Yen, Dharma Drum Publications, 1999)

Any spoken language or words (the finger) can only explain a kind of enlightenment ie. “Point to the moon”. One may ask this question several times but he will not get the right answer, or, he may get several answers in front of him. None of which is fully explained. By practicing *Ch'an* with personal involvement and going beyond the ego without any deliberate purpose (*wu-wei*) (Taoism's thought- no action). Only then will the relationship between himself and universe merge spontaneously. He may enlighten these thoughts through the mind reaching understanding by experience personally.

Site selection

I wished to develop and examine the concepts of my creation by a large scale installation. I wished to employ the form of the Heart Sutra writing panels but to bring the work from a contemporary gallery space into a large studio space. I was questioning how a large artwork could be a bridge to bring the internal and external world together? I planned to use one of biggest studios in the Fine Art building. The reason why I chose this space was because it was a self-contained environment and would get natural light as well. The space was finally selected which provided the best light conditions, the window, outdoor environment and the connection with other artwork. These choices made this space suitable for my project.

Date and time-scale

The dates of 6th – 20th July were decided upon in consultation with the MFA director and the head of the Department and agreed with MFA students and others. Following this arrangement, I set a timetable as follows: Further site research – three and a half days; development of form and preparation of materials – four working days; installation – half a day; display and documentation – four days, removal – half a day.

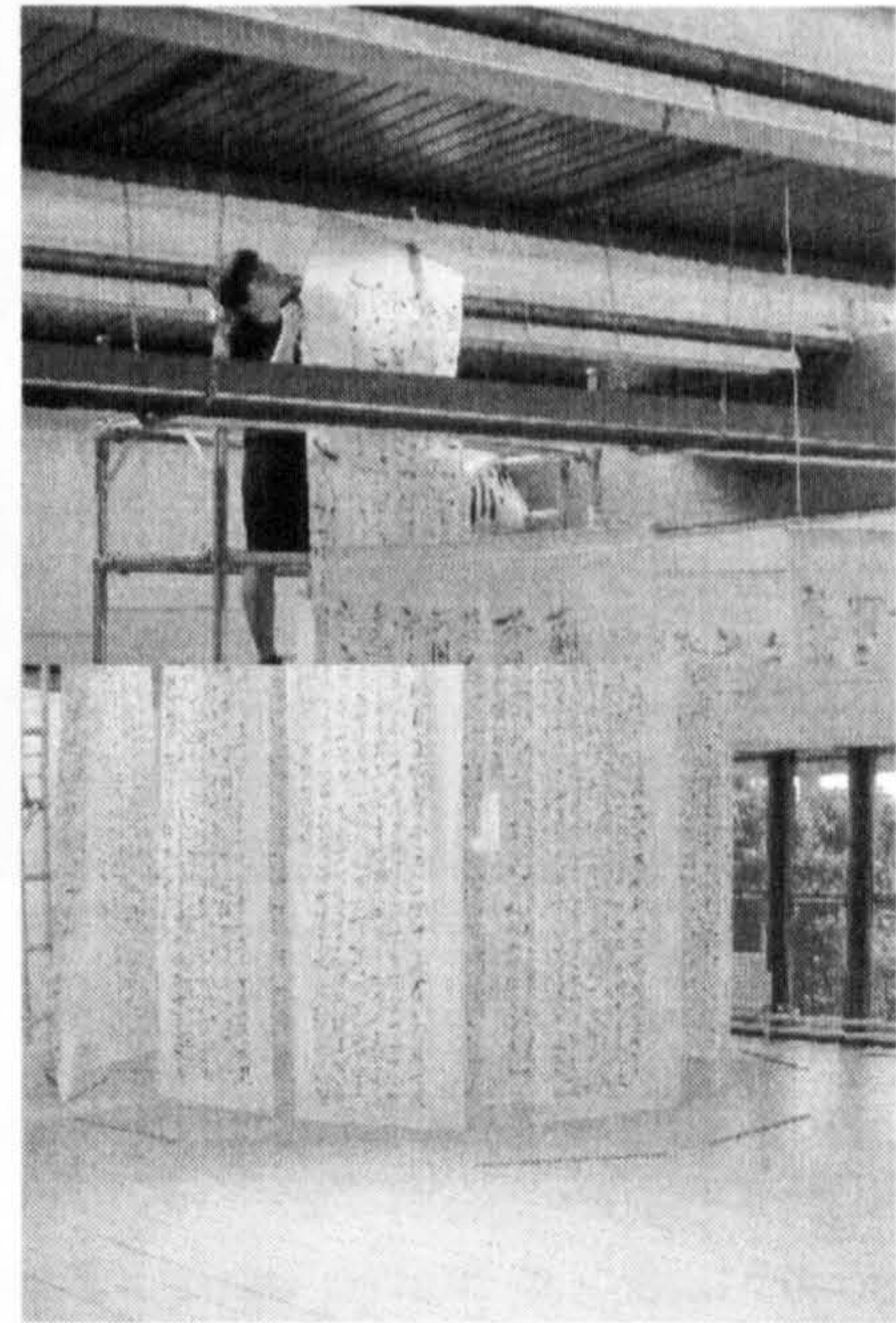
Project development

I began to draw some sketches and wrote down some ideas about how to create the work. Example 1. Try using different materials instead of ink such as water or to put dust on the wall and write the calligraphy in water. 2. Paint the whole space black and write white characters. A beam of light would be installed shining in the

centre of concentric panels of Sutra writings. The brightness of the beam of light will be controlled, as the natural light conditions are changing.

The whole idea was to find a space which would be able to be connected to the outside environment through the passage of time. A space which can be viewed from both the inside and the outside, to invite the observer to participate.

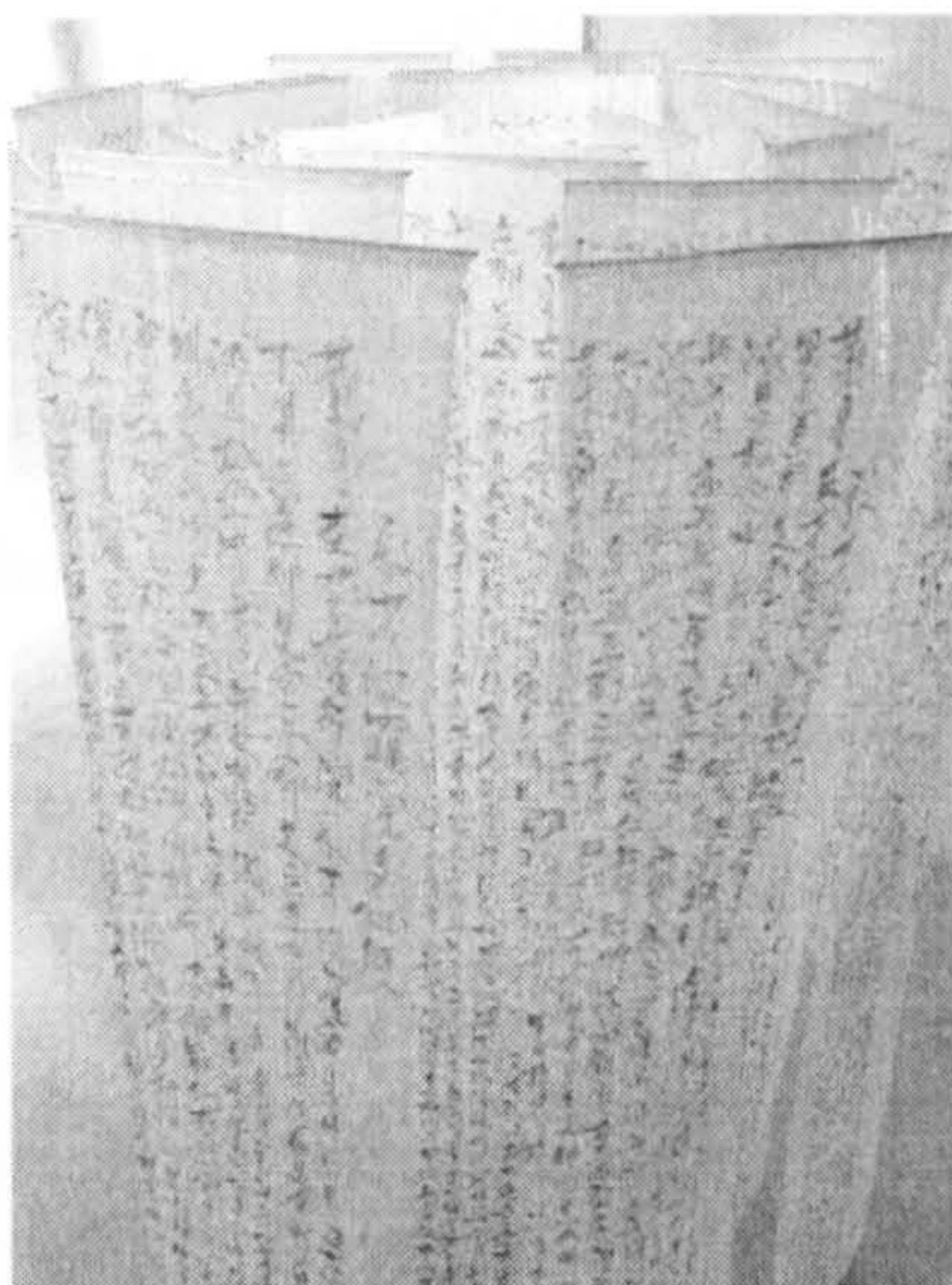
I spent a week in the studio to complete the 32 panels of the Heart Sutra muslin in black ink. Each screen is 90 centimetres wide and 4 metres long. The screen was laid on the floor in order to complete the writing. The ceiling is about 5 metres high. The muslin screens were suspended from the roof to the floor and they were able to move in the breeze. To install the screens was a difficult job. I needed to go up and down the



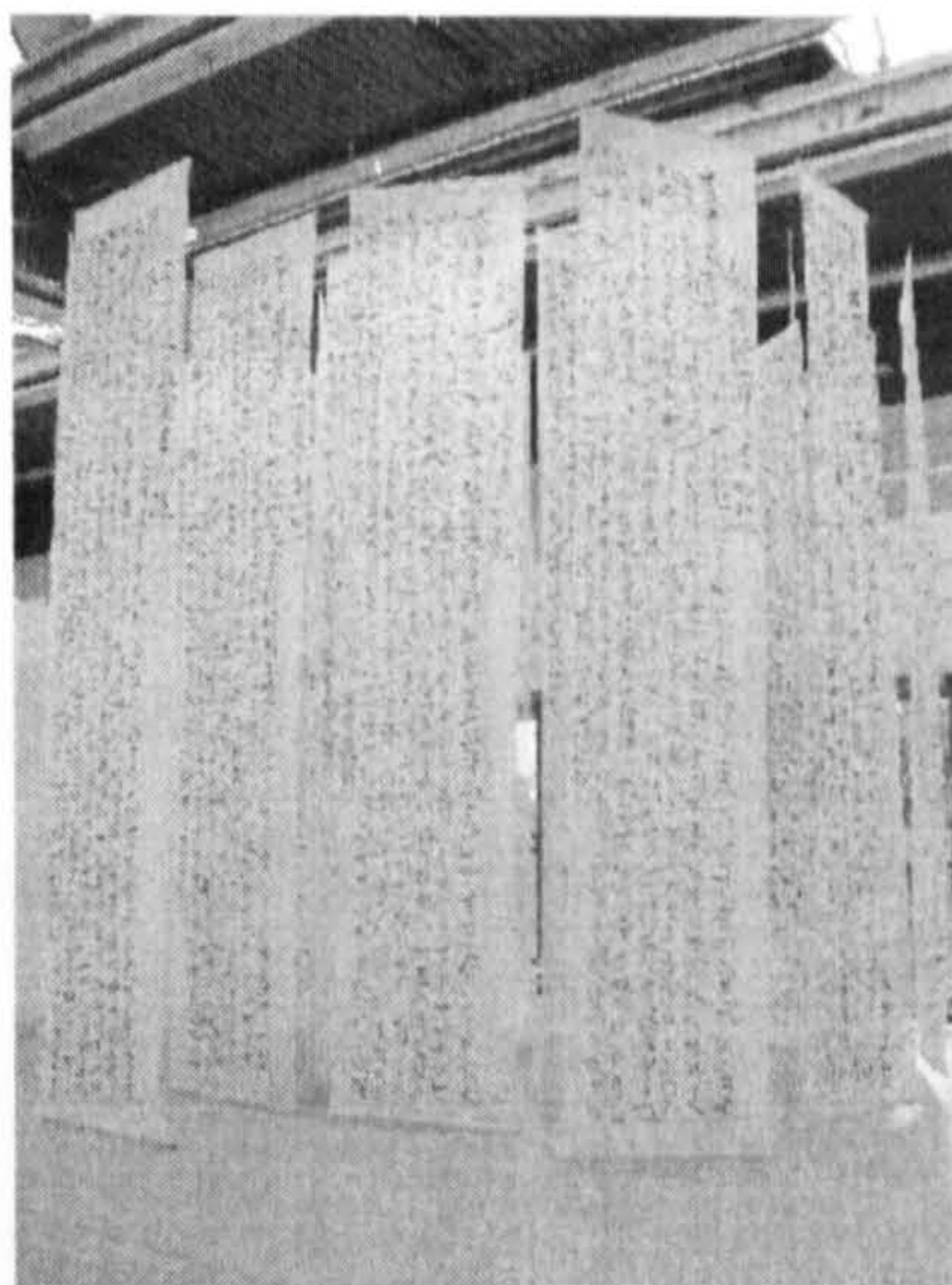
Work in process- installing the panels

scaffolding so many times in order to install them into the right positions.

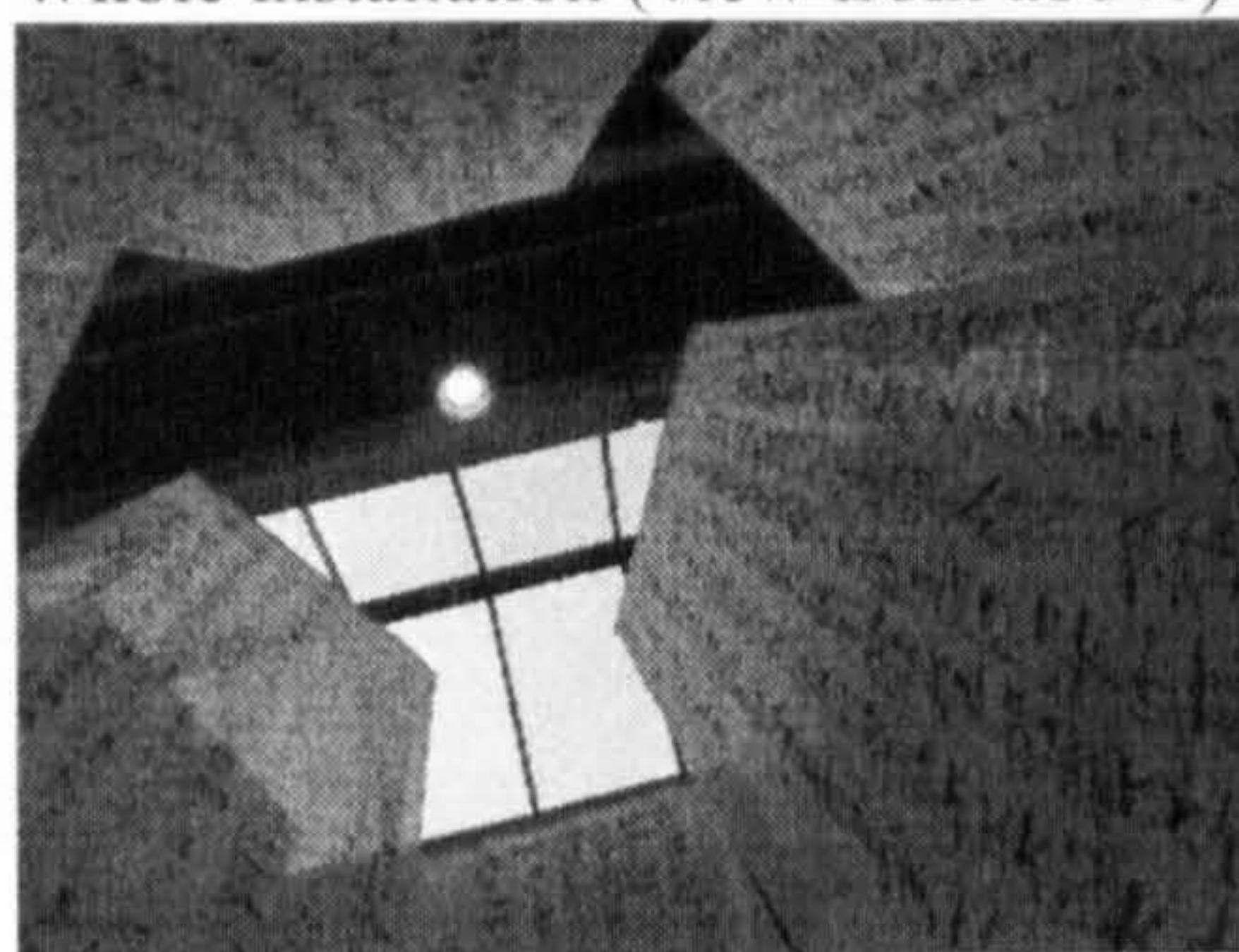
The 32 panels were divided into 4 layers in different numbers of panels from the centre. I intended to leave two spaces open, one to the front, and the other one to the back of the screens. The observer was invited to walk through the open space panels into the concentric spiral and view the work from any angle they preferred. A 150 watt beam light was installed in the middle of the spiral. It was difficult to see the beam in daylight but the lighting effect came out gradually when the sky turned dark.



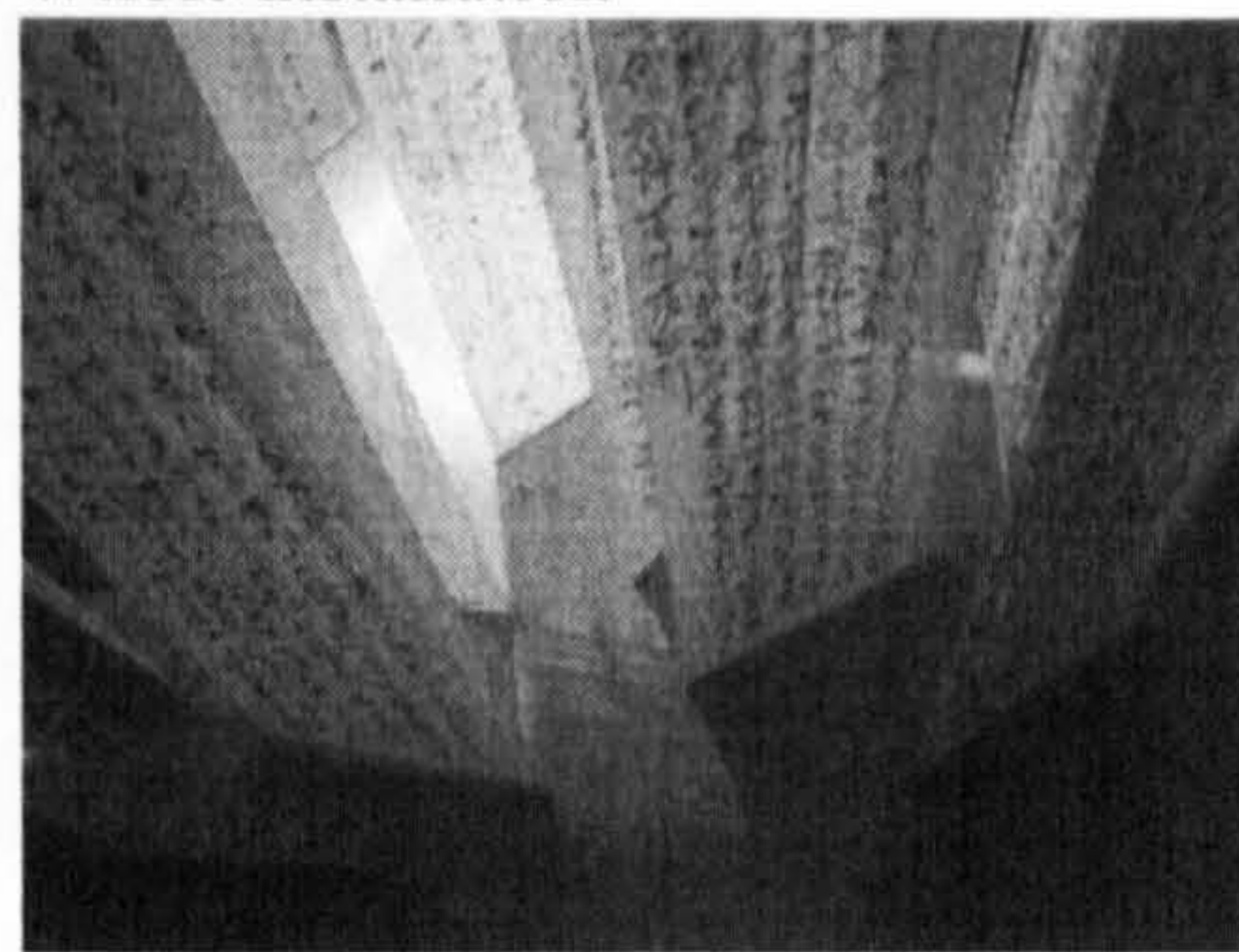
Whole installation (view from above)



Whole installation



The light



Installation in the evening time

There were some paintings and another installation displayed next to my work. The colour and the situation compromised my work to some extent but had to be tolerated given the available studio space.

Installation

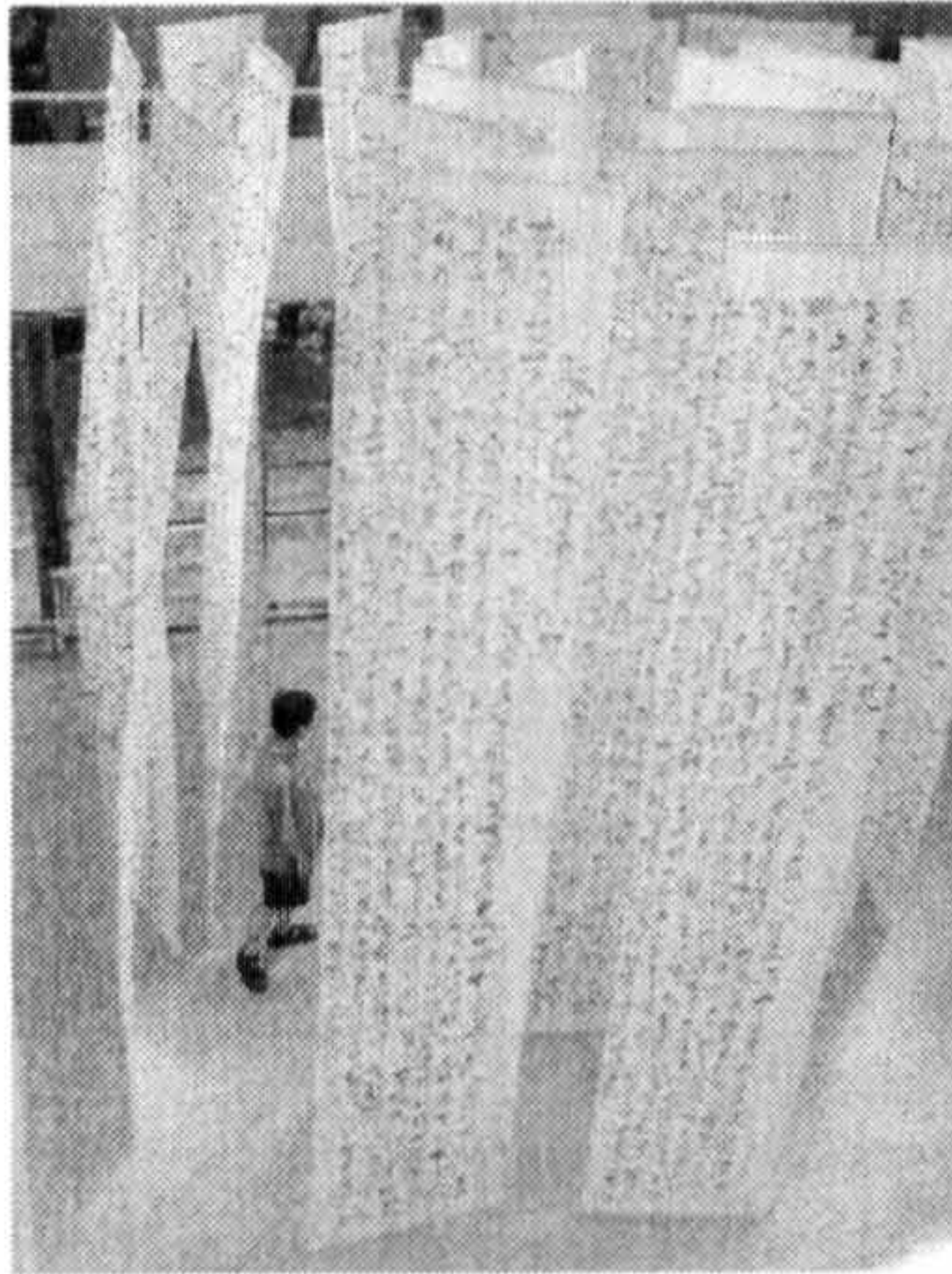
Bamboo sticks were placed on the floor in order to mark the circle for hanging the muslin panels. I started to suspend the panels from the centre towards the outside layer. Two bamboo sticks were used to suspend and provide some weight for each screen. One tied on the top, the other attached to the bottom. Four layers of concentric screens were suspended from the ceiling. A 150 watt beam light was installed in the middle of the spiral and switched on during the exhibition.

Documentation

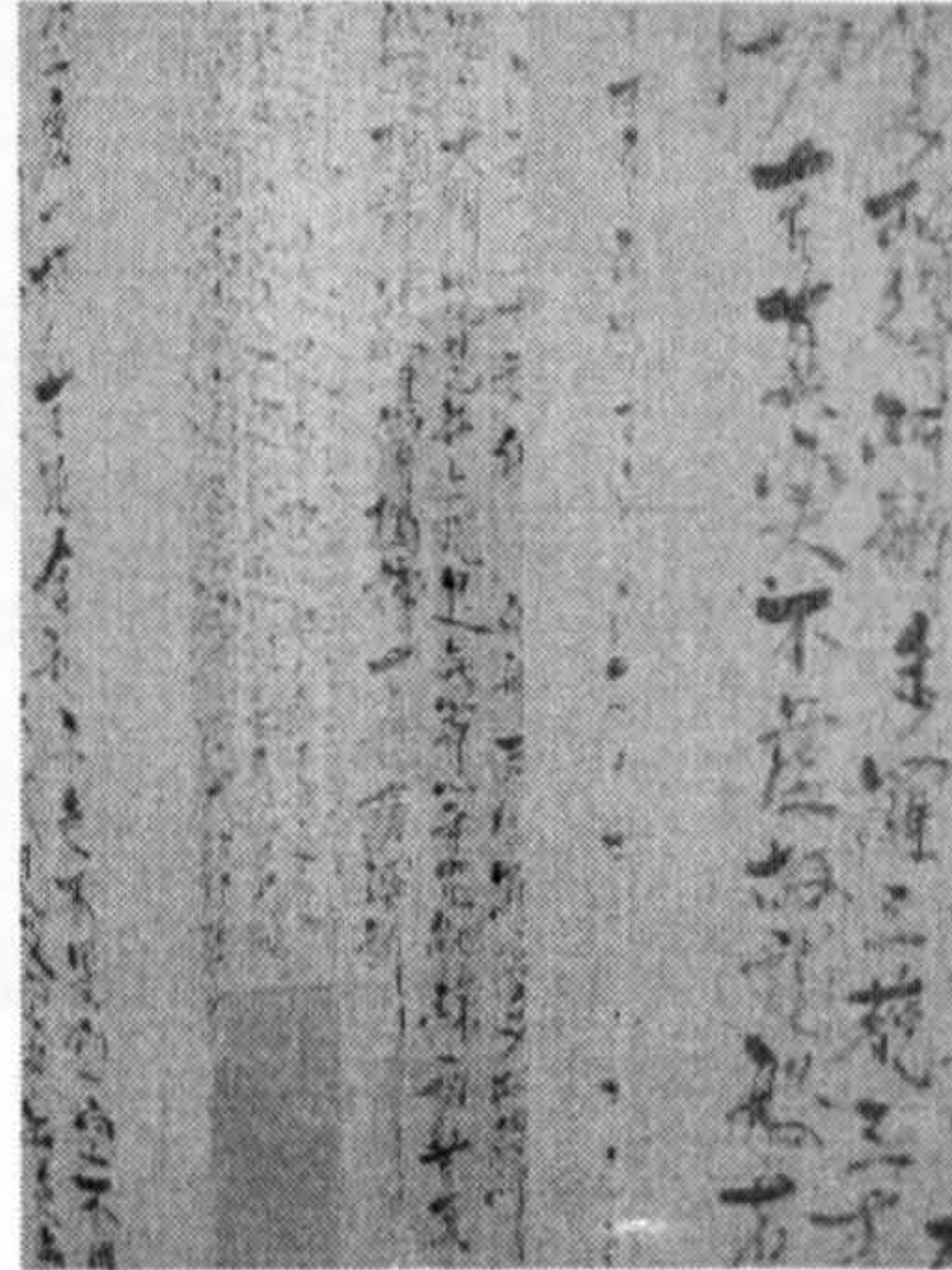
The work was documented by digital photographs and video images. Please refer to illustrations.

Reflection

The scale of the work brought my audience a different perspective. The human



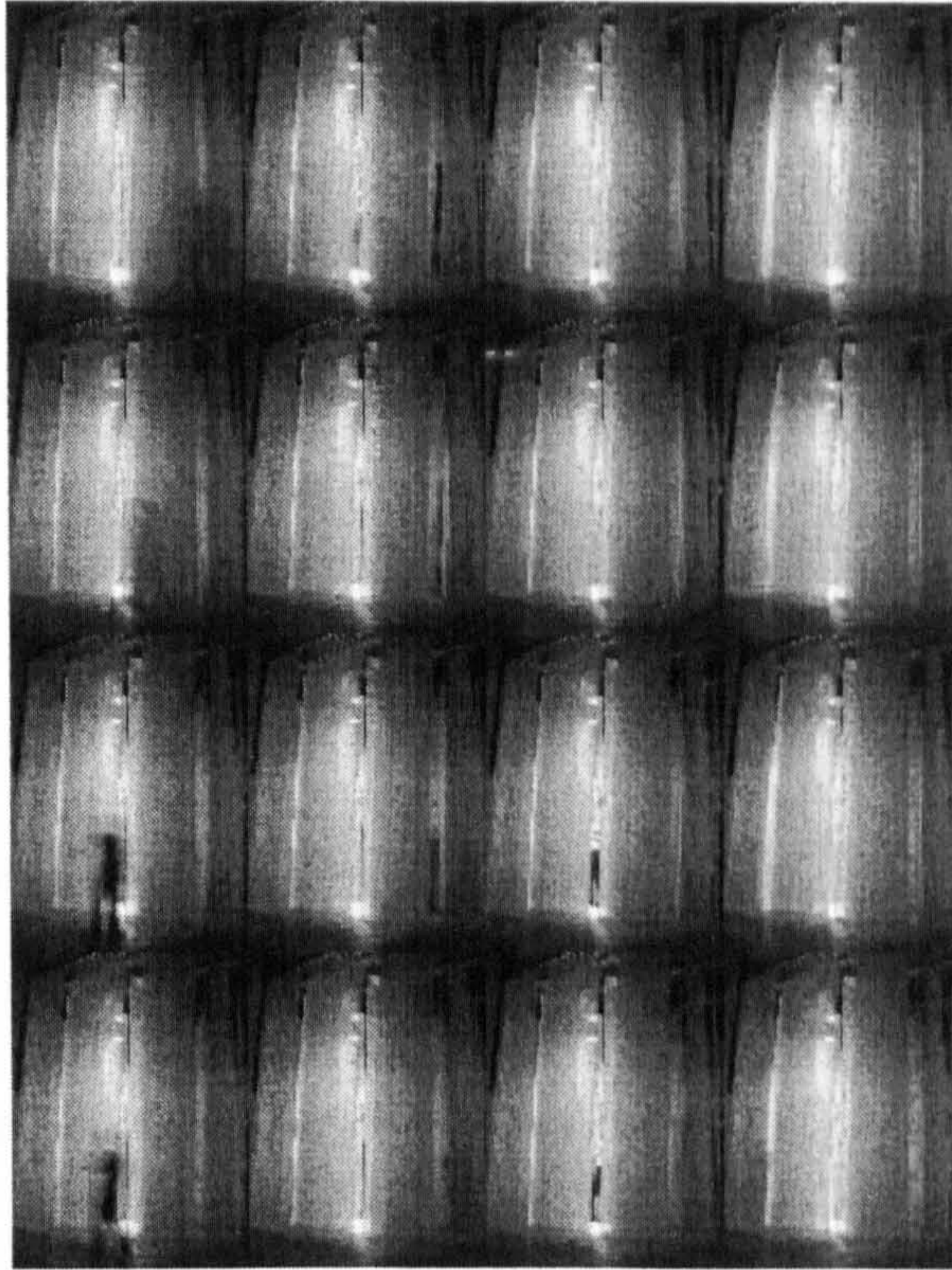
Audience engaged with the installation



being had become smaller compared with the long and high muslin panels. When the panels were moved by the wind, this action seemed to send us a message from Nature. The transparent

windows became a bridge to connect to the outdoor environment. The winds brought the spirit (*Chi*) of Nature into the exhibition space and created movement. The screens moved differently depending on the strength of the wind.

The movements of people involved within the panels were a very strong image, and I could view the audience's bodily performances from inside and outside of the spiral. The body movements combined with the wind created a changing image. Several layers of writing surrounded one whilst walking through or standing in the space between. The human form was visualized differently between the semi-transparent muslin layers.



Audience engaged with the installation in the evening

Conclusion

The project suggested a balance between artwork and the space, the internal and the external, the comparatively small spectator and the large muslin panels.

- The atmosphere was beautiful as was the artwork in producing a poetic phenomenon of *yi jing*. The audience entered the ever-moving muslin panels and walked through the spiral space to experience the spatial situation. The audience's movement integrated with the installation. The shape of individuals appeared in between the gaps of the large-scale panels and vanished into the middle of the waving muslins.

- The audience was welcome to participate in and experience the phenomenon of the integration of material and immaterial in the project. The semi-transparent texture and the black strokes of the calligraphy on muslin created

an impression of unreal images. The physical material created the sense of immaterial, which was abstract.

- The breeze moved the hanging muslin like a naughty boy tries to stir the curtain to see a shy girl's face. That movement – of the script covered muslin – became symbolic of the action of pointing, leading towards some answer or ultimate truth. The movement of air, evidenced in the physical motion of the cloth, presented the natural force from outside, linking interior and external spaces. As viewers experienced the work they would stand still, temporarily, thus contrasting with the subtle sway of the muslin; revealing a relationship between the material and immaterial.

- My artwork shows the presence of space, light and my intention within the space in which I am working. I am interested in making a space that has qualities I can discover just from the space itself in which the audience can wander in and out of. This allows the audience to understand the quality of the internal and external. Permanence and impermanence are within each other. Agnes Martin would say, “*anyone who can sit on a stone in a field awhile can see my painting.*”¹⁹¹ I would be grateful if the viewer can spend time to see the work with their own eyes and sense the artwork with six senses and a mind.

- I believe the same thing as Richard Long once described in a conversation with Anne Seymour saying that “*the viewer can also bring things to the work, bring conclusions to it, influences I could not foresee. But that's completely different from the artist making certain explanations and giving certain symbolic meanings to the*

¹⁹¹ P. 18, James Turrell: Spirit and Light, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, June 6- July 26, 1998

work.”¹⁹² I have studied the Chinese garden, the *Ch’an* garden, and Chinese philosophy and now review my own understanding of those subjects. The concept of *yi jing* and *Ch’an* philosophy has influenced my entire creation and thoughts. I naturally reveal those concepts in my own practical development. I intended to create a *yi jing* using different materials to draw the audience’s attention and let the audience interpret the phenomena through their own participation.

- The work was temporarily installed in the space to create a beautiful *yi jing* but the integration of the work with the space and the surrounding environment seemed not strong enough. The materials were brought into the space and installed. Past history and the contemporary live situation were not integrated with each other enough. I have to redefine this idea for further projects.

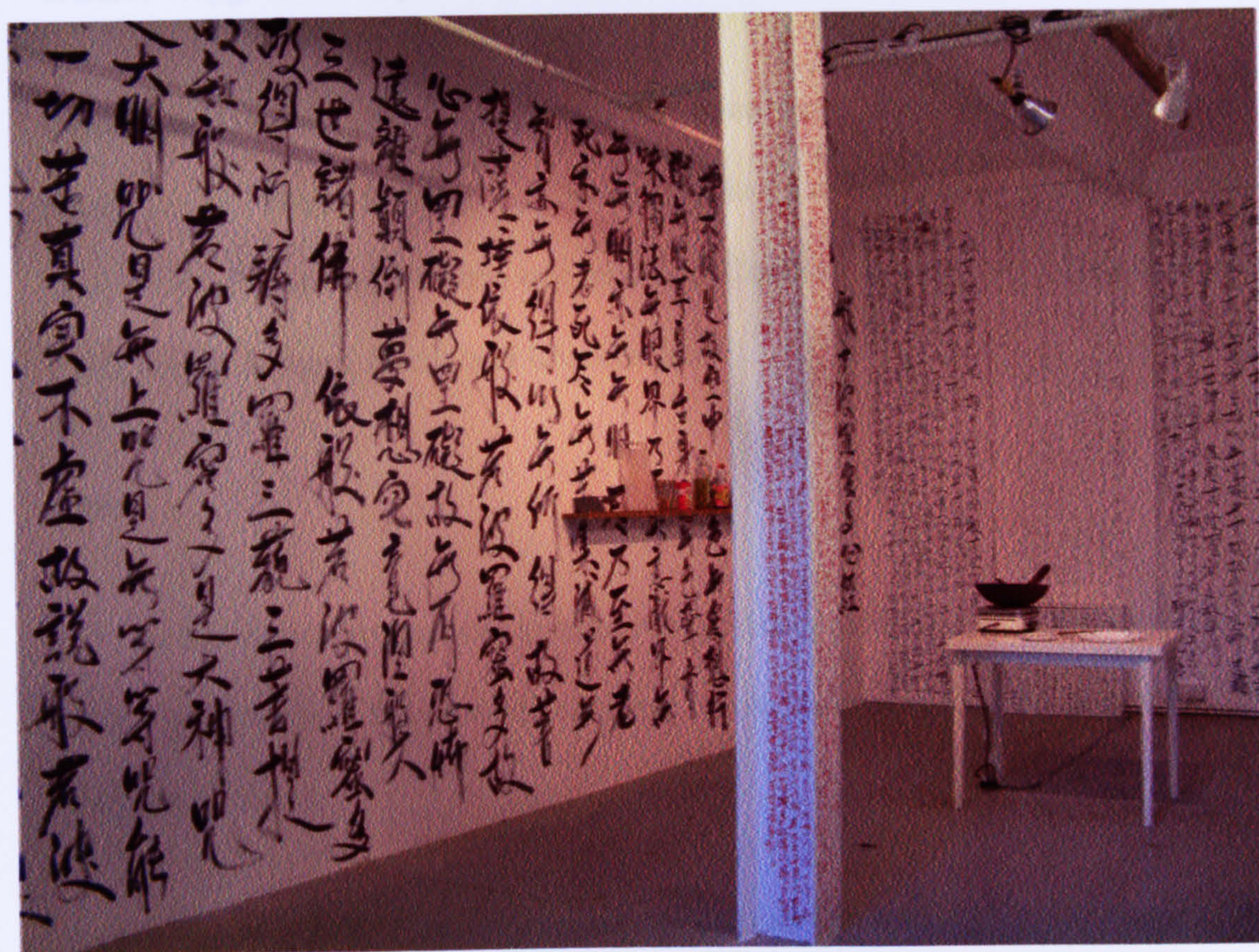
¹⁹² P. 92, Richard Long, *Working in Circles*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1991

Project 9

Title: I Make Art, I Cook Food

When: 20th - 27th October 2001

Where: Weygood Gallery and Studio, Newcastle upon Tyne



I Make Art, I Cook Food

Description:

Site-specific:

I was selected to join a group exhibition "On the Edge of" Exhibition at the

Weygood gallery.

Project 9

Title: I Make Art, I Cook Food

When: 20th – 27th October 2001

Where: Waygood Gallery and Studio, Newcastle upon Tyne

Materials: Chinese ink, Cooking sauces (Rice wine, Rice vinegar, Soya sauce, Sunflower oil, Sugar and Salt) , Cooking tools (Cooking knife, Chopping board, Chopsticks, Plates and Electric cooker) and Cooking ingredients (Spring Onion, Chilli pepper, Ginger, Garlic and Chicken fillet)

Aims:

The aim of this project was to examine the relationship between the viewers, the artist's performance, the artwork, and the whole gallery within the context of the everyday situation.

To use my daily life experience as an idea to make a connection to the contemporary notion of life.

Description:

Site selection

I was selected to join a group exhibition “On the Hoof 4” Exhibition at the Waygood gallery.

We discussed with the director and fellow exhibitors about how to divide the exhibition space. The space I chose was located at the end of the gallery because it would present as an individual space. There were two partition walls which had been built in order to create three sections.

Date and time-scale

“On the Hoof 4” was scheduled between 20th – 27th October 2001 for the exhibition. I set a timetable as follows: With three months to develop and prepare the project; further site research – half a day; preparation of materials – two days; installation – a week, display and documentation – a week; removal and painting the gallery – two days.

Project development

The first thought was to create a space with calligraphy in it. The writing would fully occupy the whole space, walls and floor. And there would be six concentric screens hanging at one end of the room. It was a combination of the “Looking for the Moon” and the “Heart Sutra” projects. I had two months preparation before the exhibition started, and something different from my initial concept would be the result on this occasion.

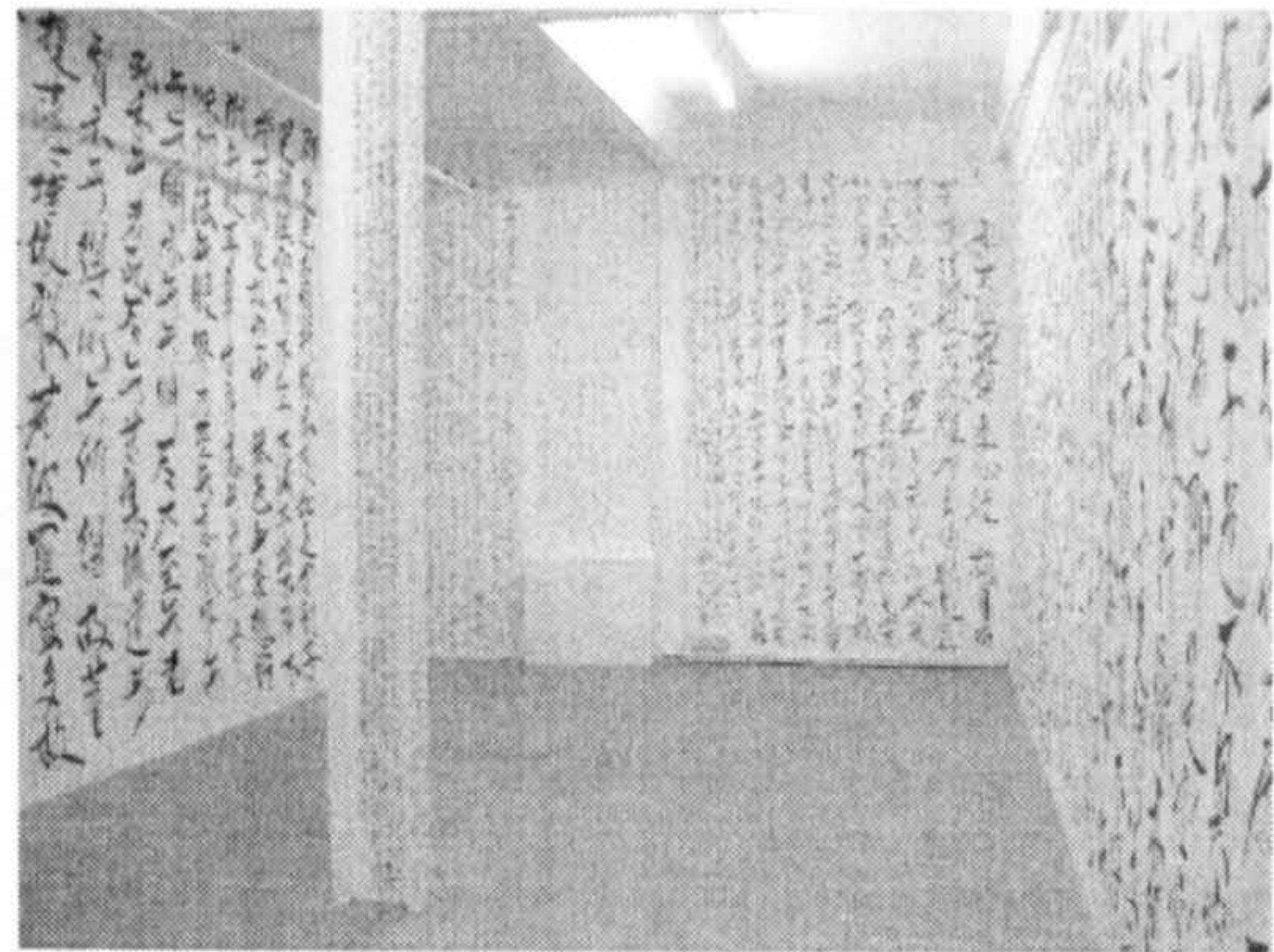
The space presented an opportunity to explore the idea that arose from the earlier ‘Heart Sutra’ project, which was to do with the artist’s performance as an important product. Why not employ what I normally do in my daily routines? It would still include the Sutra chanting practices but employ the notion of making art from the function of cooking. “One stone two birds!” I drew another picture of what

ideas came out from the inspiration. A display of the materials and tools, which I would use for my cooking.

There were three elements in this project. They were cooking, calligraphy and myself. Through the food cooking performance, chopping vegetables and the making of art, my purpose was to try and draw out and express my understanding of the phenomena of daily existence from which the images and forms that I display arise.

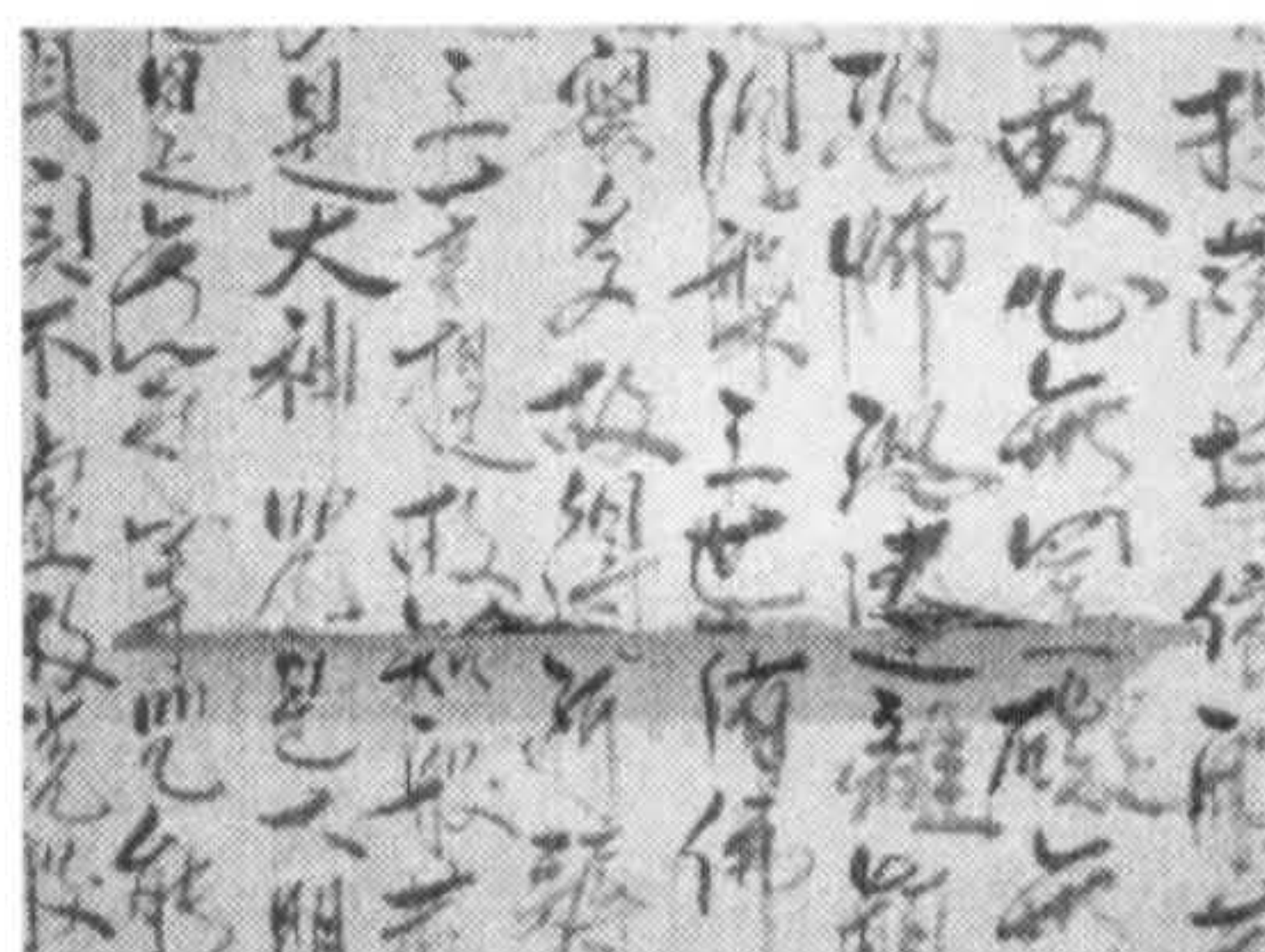
Installation

Firstly, the whole space was painted white. A large numbers of windows were covered in calligraphy. Secondly, the space was filled with my calligraphy. The Sutra was written in several black and grey tones to present a different depth and perspective. A pillar was specifically covered in red characters to symbolise a warm heart.

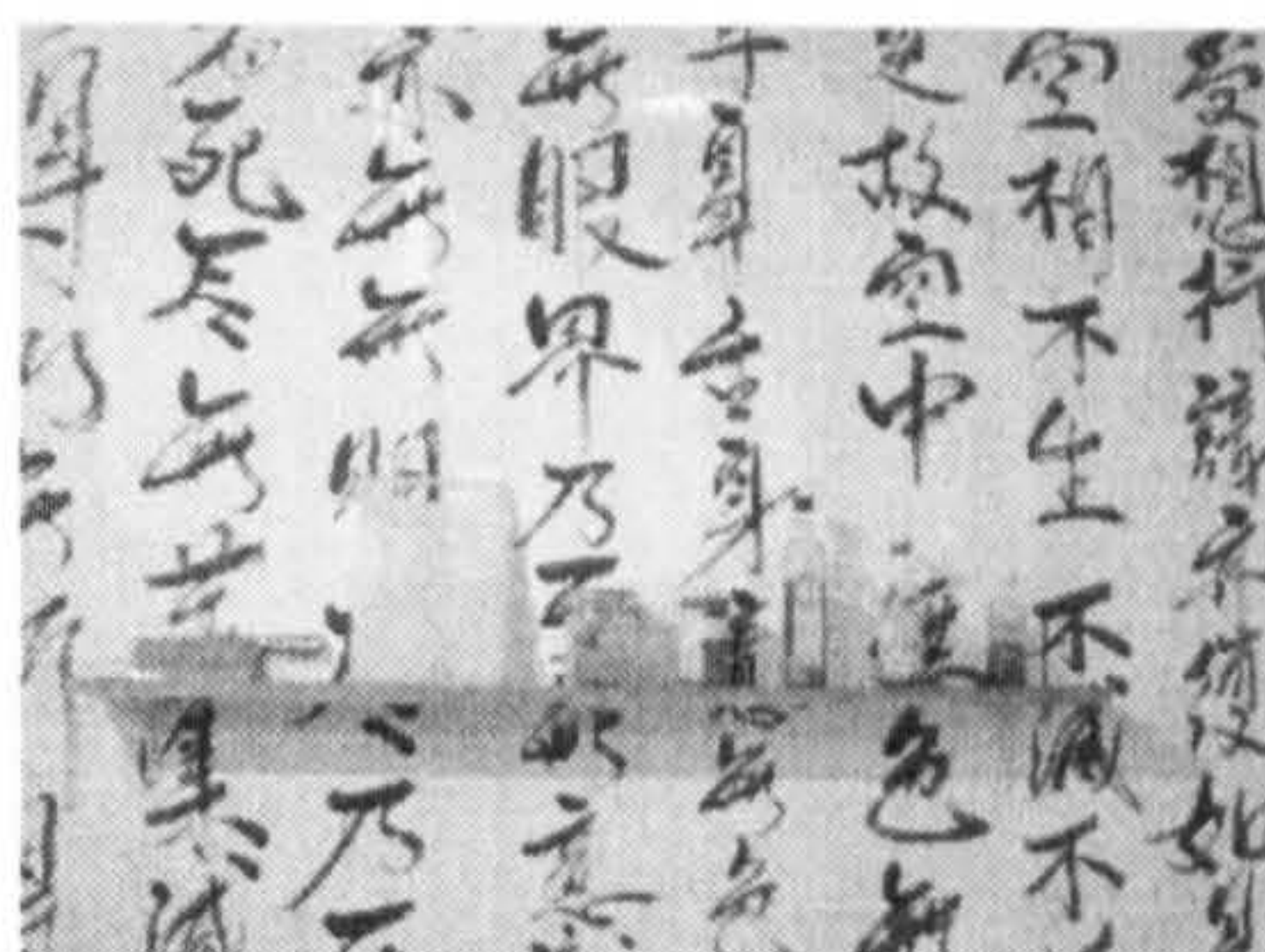


Work in progress - calligraphy on walls

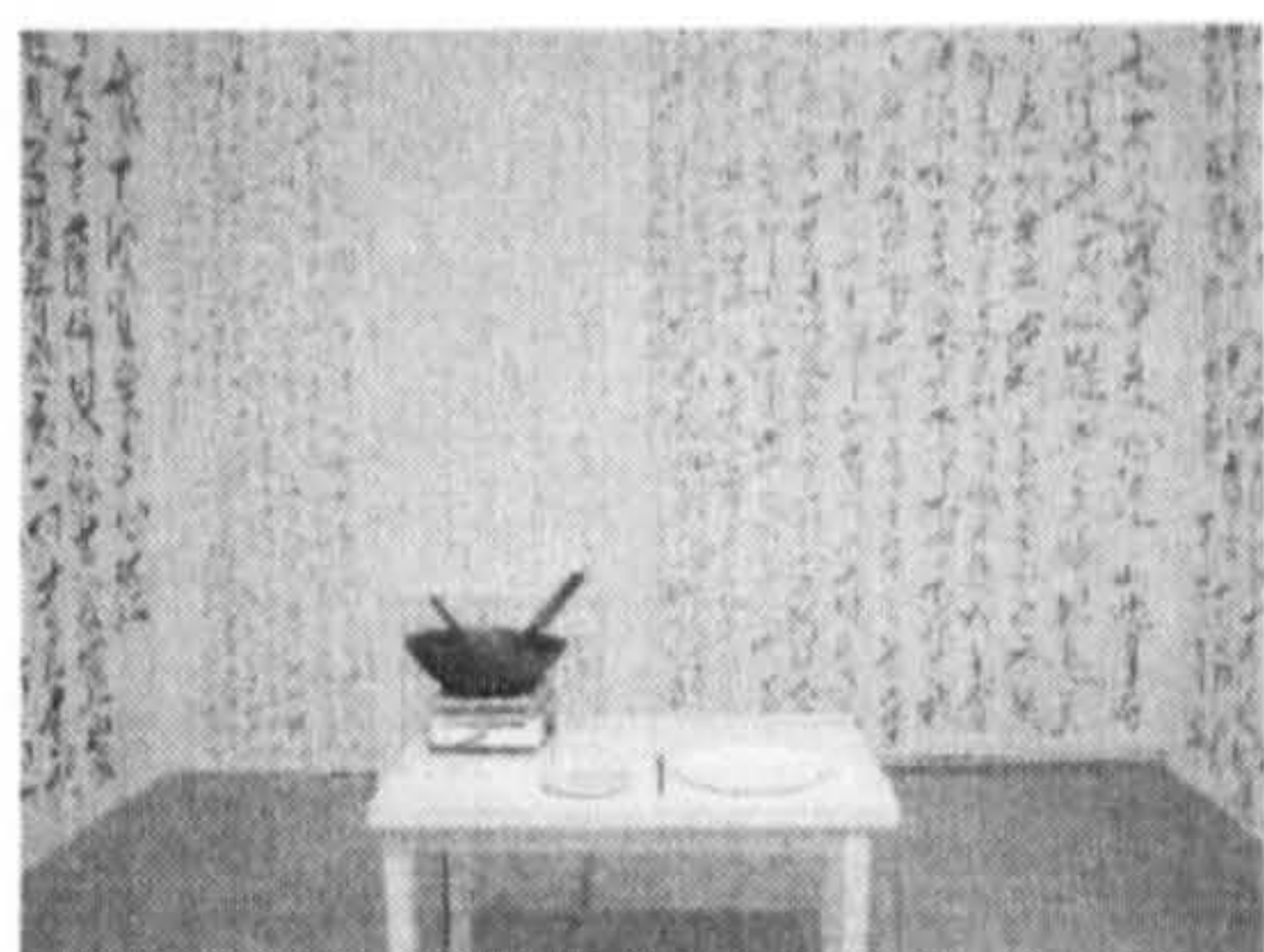
Two shelves were constructed on each side of the space to install cooking ingredients (Spring Onion, Chilli pepper, Ginger, Garlic) and tools (Cooking knife, Chopping board, Chopsticks, Plates and Electric cooker). A table was brought in and placed in the middle of the space. An electric cooker and Chinese wok were placed on the table.



Cooking ingredients



Cooking tools

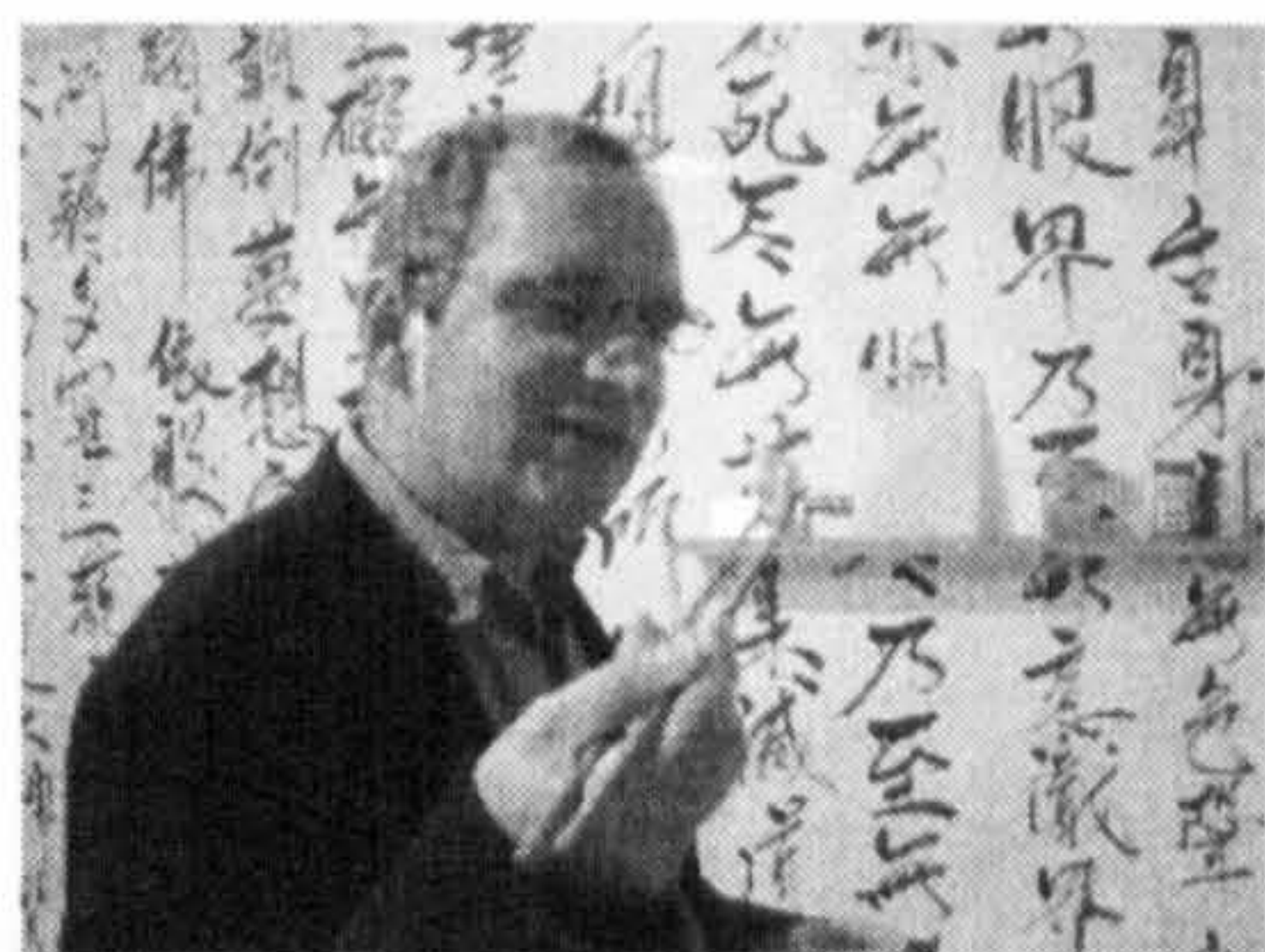


Cooker, wok and plates

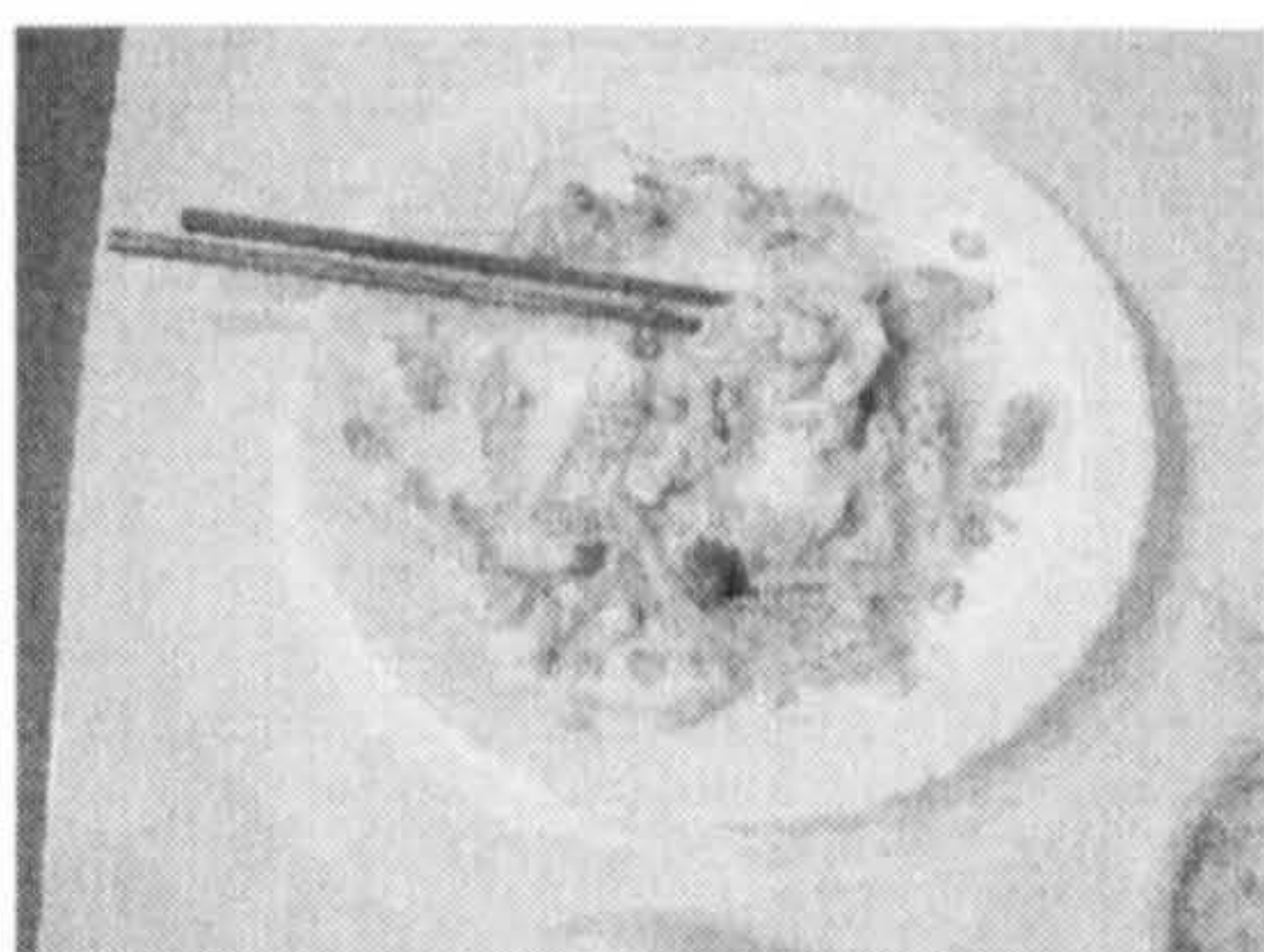
Two chicken fillet and vegetable dishes were fried and served to the audience; one at the opening of the show and the other at the end of the exhibition in order to present a conclusion for this project. The moisture from the cooking and the audience affected the ink on the windows and it started to run on the opening night. This has provided evidence of constantly changing contemporary conditions.



Cooking the chicken dish

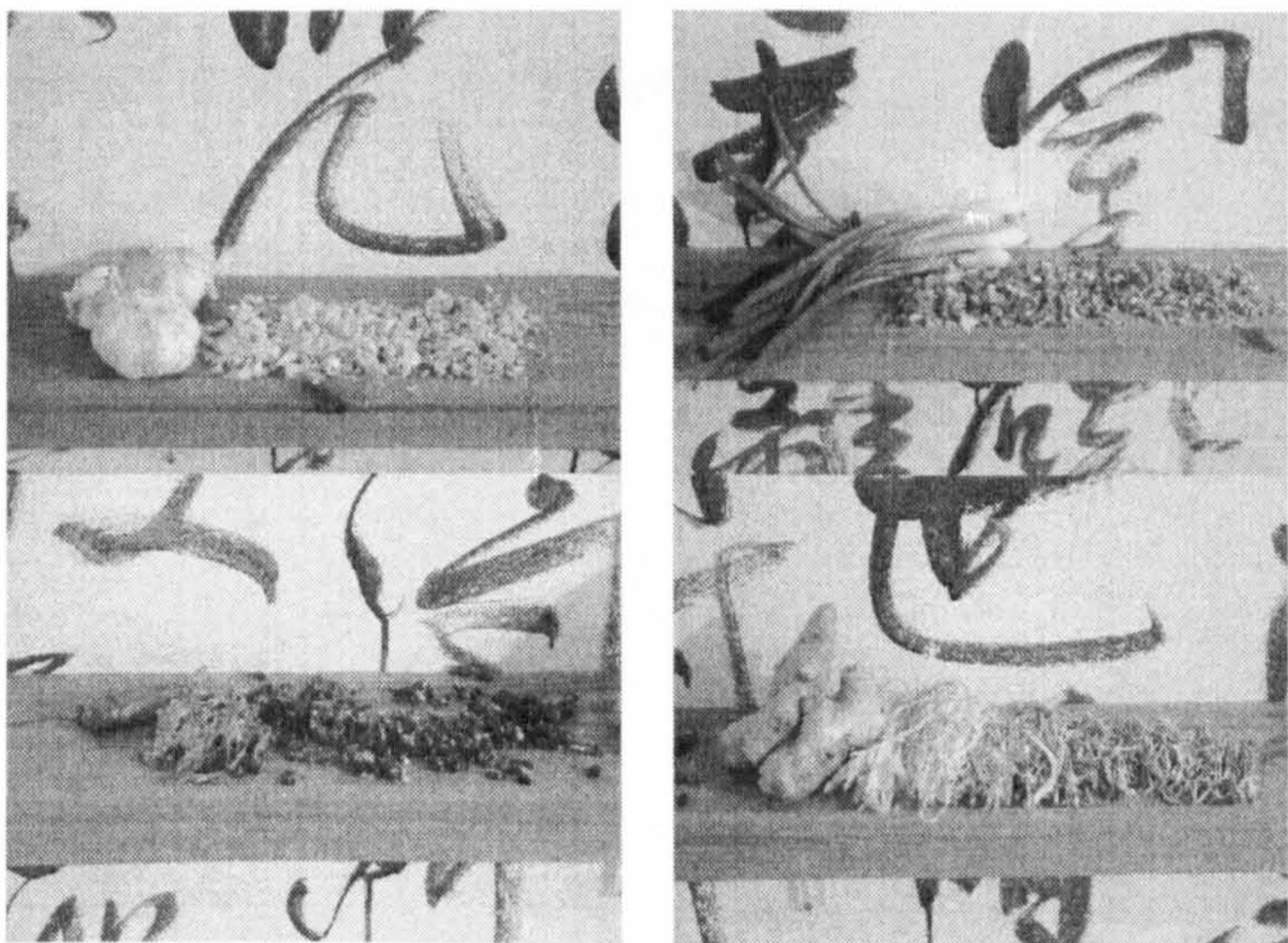


Audience participation



Half eaten dish

During the exhibition period, I spent half an hour in the exhibition space and chopped the vegetables in order to keep the smell fresh as a visualization of my existence in the space.



Detail of chopped vegetables (garlic, spring onion, chilli, ginger)

The table, cooker and wok were left for display after the opening. All the vegetables were chopped fresh everyday and displayed on the shelf to keep the smell fresh. A chicken dish was cooked at the end of the exhibition to make a conclusion for this project.

Documentation

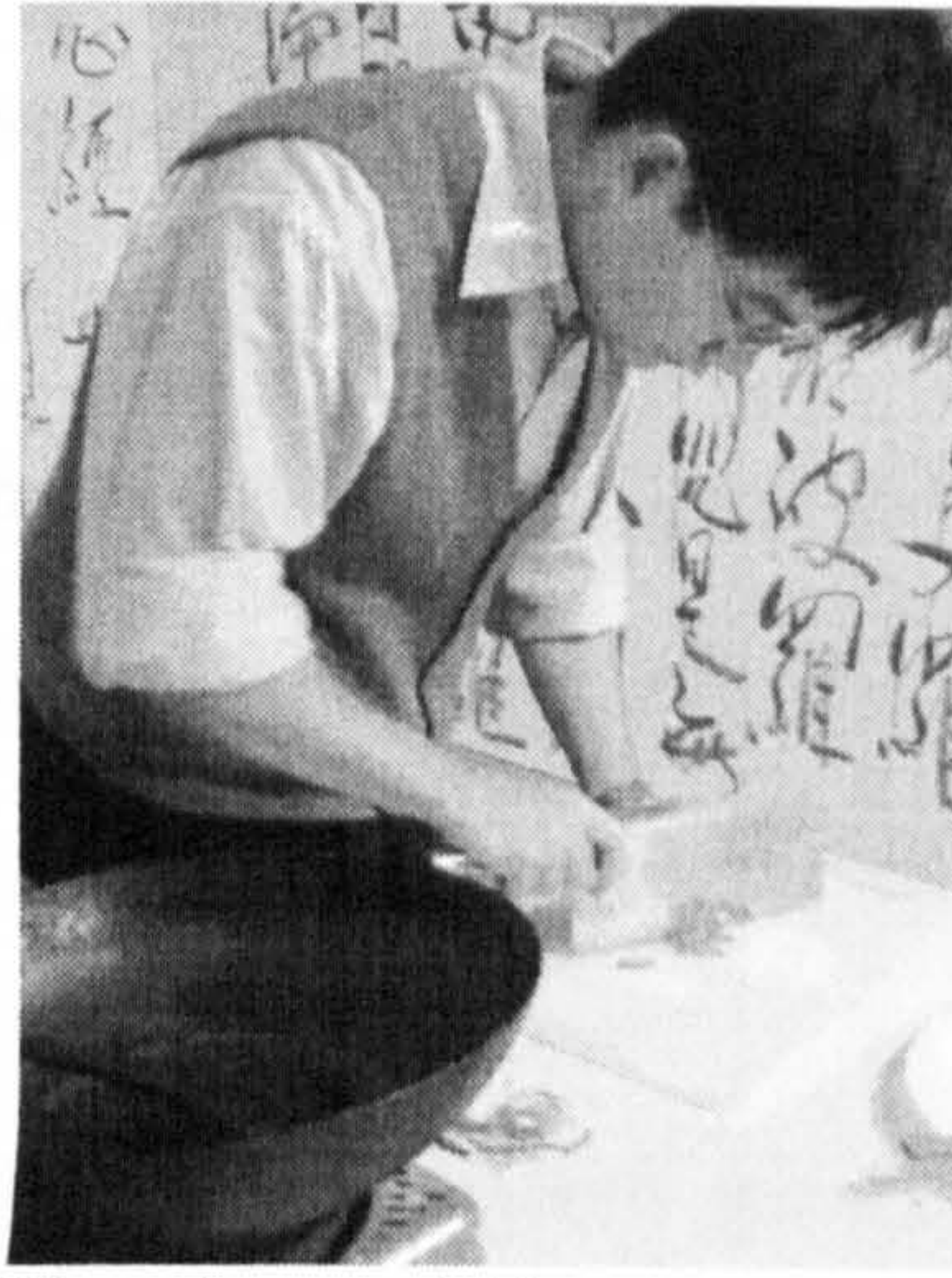
The work was documented by digital photographs please refer to illustrations.

Reflection

In oriental culture calligraphy is revered not just for its aesthetic formality, but also for its connection with and expression of “self” and that which transcends one into a spiritual state. In my opinion cooking is the same as this. It is also something that cuts right to the heart of the culture and environment that I grew up in, yet it is not something of which I can claim particular ownership.

By its very nature food is something that is a communal and social phenomena. The concept of interaction with the mind of the audience is important to me and it is through such interaction that my work is completed.

Cooking, calligraphy, art, philosophy and culture are all part of ordinary daily life.



Chopping vegetables

For me it is this very ordinariness that lies at the root and heart of the truly profound.

The contemporary environment has helped me to visualize my creation by absorbing the history of Chinese culture. It has turned my modern life into an artistic condition. Traditionally, a *Ch'an* artist creates art from a contemporary living situation. His life could be described as an art form. As the great monk painter Shih Tao (1642-1718) said: *“the best painters past and present induce their inner feeling by observing things outside and elaborate their sentiments by understanding what they observe.”*¹⁹³ In a modern life situation, this wisdom has not been surpassed. Helping the artist to observe from live conditions and then creating artwork from inside his human spirituality. These artistic creations can never be separated from the “Being” environment. Through the repetition of our daily life, we hope to transcend to a high level of being.

Conclusion

¹⁹³ P. 16, Indoctrination and intuitional enlightenment their correlation- a new approach to the pedagogy of traditional Chinese painting. Deren Li. Department of Art, University of Shanxi, Shanxi, China, 1989

- My daily life has become a phenomenon and presented in an artistic environment and introduced to the public. My life does not just belong to myself, but also becomes part of the audience's own experience. The relationship between the artwork, audience and myself were integrated with the performance of cooking, the chicken dishes served and the fresh chopped vegetables.

- This experimental space was created utilising images of Oriental cultural influences. The whole project was also trying to use traditional Chinese *Ch'an* philosophy with my modern life style as a tool to create contemporary enlightenment in a modern gallery space. Also to use Chinese aesthetic theory as a cultural background to create an artwork link with the contemporary installation concept.

Project 10

Title: The Puzzle

When: 19th – 23rd August 2002

Where: "Long Bar Hang" Exhibition², Sotheby's Contemporary Gallery, London



The Puzzle

I was invited to curate the exhibition at Sotheby's Contemporary Gallery in London. The exhibition was a 10-day event, from 19th to 23rd August 2002. The title of the exhibition was "Long Bar Hang".

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Project 10

Title: The Puzzle

When: 19th – 23rd August 2002

Where: “Long Way Home” Exhibition¹⁹⁴, Studio B, Goldsmiths College, London

Aims:

A number of concepts for an installation could be achieved through the diversity of materials chosen, the relationship of the outside and inside world, the audience participation experience and so on.

I aimed to invite a large audience and offer them an opportunity to participate in my work. This project aimed to focus on the audience's participation only thus changing the role of the artist to a witness character for this project.

Description:

Site selection

I was invited to join a group exhibition at Goldsmith College in London. The exhibition was to be held for a week. It only allowed a few days for the artists to set

¹⁹⁴ The Visual Arts Department, Goldsmiths College and Taipei Educational and Cultural Centre supported this Exhibition. Both institutions have been devoted to the development of contemporary visual arts and cross-cultural exchanges since they were established. This was their first attempt to share their enthusiasm with contemporary visual artists from other countries. The exhibition featured artists from Taiwan studying in the U.K., but it also included works from artists who come from other countries such as U.S.A., Germany, South Africa, Greece and Russia/Georgia.

up their work.

A number of images of the spaces had been sent to me to help choose the site. It was hard to sense which one could be the best location for this project.

When I was actually in the studio, my idea about the space became clearer. There were two spaces available for me to install the work. Both of them had natural light through the windows. One was facing east and still had paintings on the wall which were left by the previous artist, the other one was facing west but a totally empty space. I decided to take the empty room as my project space.

Date and time-scale

The curator arranged an agreement for the dates of 19th – 23rd August with the college for the exhibition. We were under the curator's guidelines and other commitments to prepare the materials and install the work. I set a timetable as follows: Further site research – half a day; development of form and preparation of materials – one day; installation – two days; display and documentation – two days, removal – half a day.

Project development

How to invite more of the audience to participate with my creation? This was the aim of this project for which I was very strongly concerned. My decision was to make a puzzle (involving Chinese characters) which would encourage the audience to participate in the work.

What Chinese content should I write for this project? I was thinking of writing a

famous poem from one of many Tang poems but none inspired me particularly. The idea of using the Sutra appeared again. I thought this was a good idea, as the concept of self-experience is part of the wisdom, which the Sutra would always emphasize. The Sutra is quite short and there are not many difficult characters for a non-Chinese audience to recognize.

The other concern was the time limitation, restricting me from doing something more complicated. A quick and simple idea was much more suitable for the situation. The exhibition space was located in the Visual Art department of the college. I would only be able to stay there for three days to set up the work and I was not familiar with the location. How could I make a piece of work in such a short time? The work needed to be made in advance then constructed in the actual space.

Two pieces of Sutra were written. The content of these were exactly the same. One was on the wall, which was used as a model for a jigsaw puzzle. The other was written on white (15 cm) square MDF. Each small piece had a character on it. Most of these small pieces were put on the floor at random, though some of them were arranged in the right position to give a clue. The audience were invited to look at the piece of writing on the wall and compose the jigsaw puzzle on the floor.

Installation

A copy of Sutra was written on the wall directly.

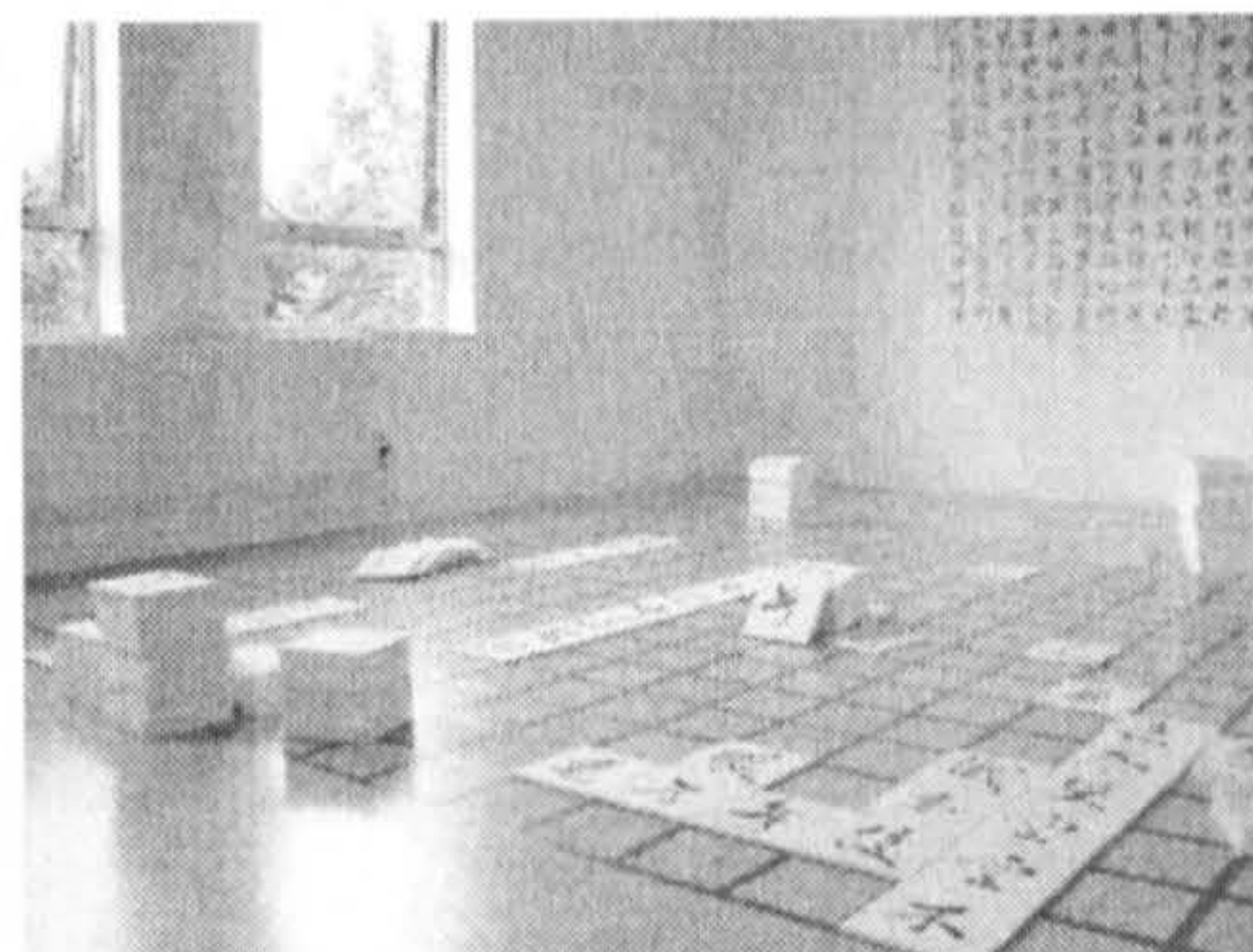
A perimeter of a 2.55 by 2.55 metre square was outlined on the floor using red tape. Within this area were delineated 289 squares, 15 by 15 centimetres square (with the same tape).



Working process - taping the squares



The whole installation at the beginning of the exhibition



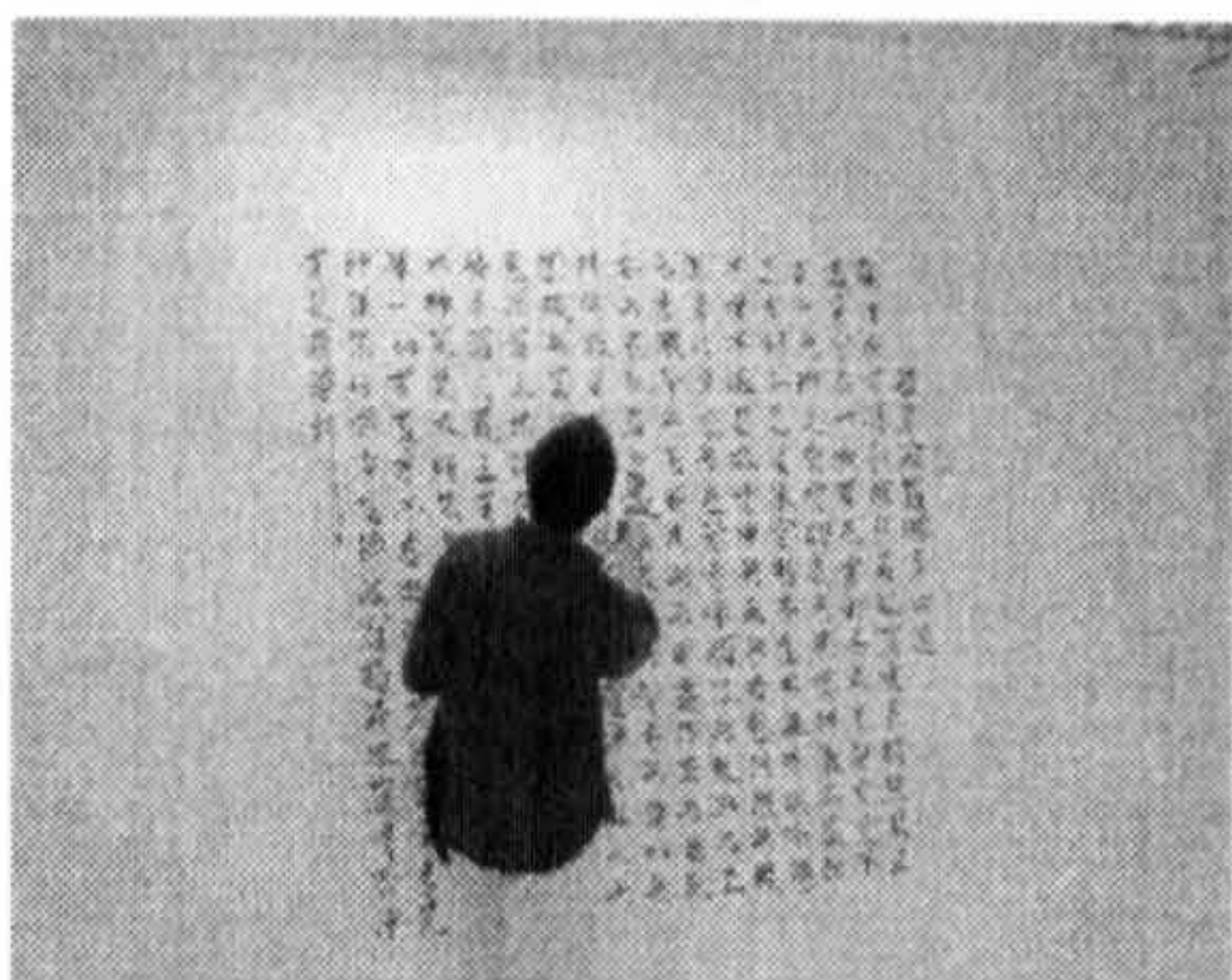
Chinese characters were written on MDF (15 by 15 cm) and placed upon these individual outlined squares to correspond with the writing on the adjacent wall. The tiles were left in different groups, some of them were matched with the writing on the wall, and others were piled together and left around the red puzzle.

Documentation

The work was documented by digital photographs and slides please refer to illustrations.

Reflection

The main purpose of this project was to bring the audience into the artwork. For the audience, the artwork is no longer something that they are not allowed to touch, but something they were welcome to engage with.

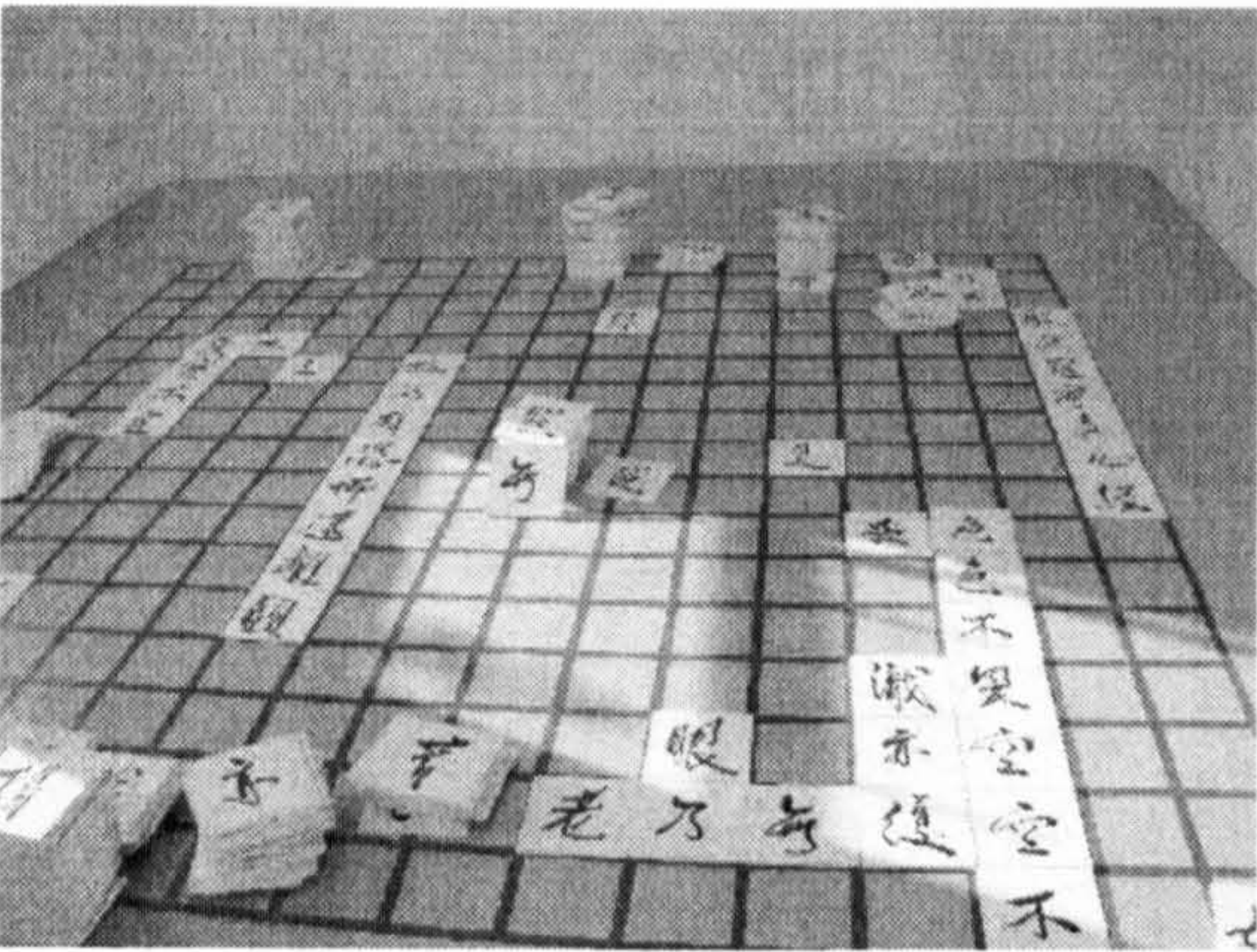


Audience engagement with the installation and working on the puzzle

In the main the audience mostly did not understand Chinese or have a friend

who could read the Chinese characters but they worked together to compose the puzzle. The audience picked one of the characters trying to match the character on the wall then place it into the red square on the floor. Adults accompanied some children and helped each other to find the right character and place it into the right position. The communication was very interesting between the children and the adults. The children seem to find the character more quickly than the adults and they acted very excitedly as they discovered something new. The audiences were keen to know the meaning of the character they had picked. I translated for them and so did the other Chinese speakers in the audience.

The most interesting point of this project was that this artwork was not finished until the audience had completed the puzzle. It was exciting to see those character tiles being composed in those red squares and the empty space decreasing. Therefore, this artwork was a product of the cooperation between the audience and the artist.



The beginning of the exhibition



The end of the exhibition

Conclusion

● As *Ch'an* emphasizes one has to experience wisdom by him/her self. Self-participation can teach one to understand the meaning more deeply than merely being told by others. Artistic experience cannot be separated from contemporary living conditions.

- The Dictionary of Art Terms explains “Process art” as “*the spectators are invited to reconstruct what has been done, through the evidence placed before them.*”¹⁹⁵ My work had set something up for the audience to follow and compose. The audience participated in the creation and became part of the creation and completed the installation. The audience integration was widely different from one to another. The audience explored the work through their own decisions or by discussion with others, walking through the space and completing the work. The action of comparing and composing gives meaning to the interaction of objects and the audience.

- I changed my role of artist to a witness character in this project. The materials helped me to achieve my aim to focus upon an audience’s participation only.

- As Michael Fried illuminates a sense of Installation is: “*the temporal nature of the art, its dependence upon a particular situation, and its focus on the beholder.*”¹⁹⁶ In this project, the audience was not just present to see and experience the space but fully participate with the work. The interaction tied the artwork and the audience together and made this project complete.

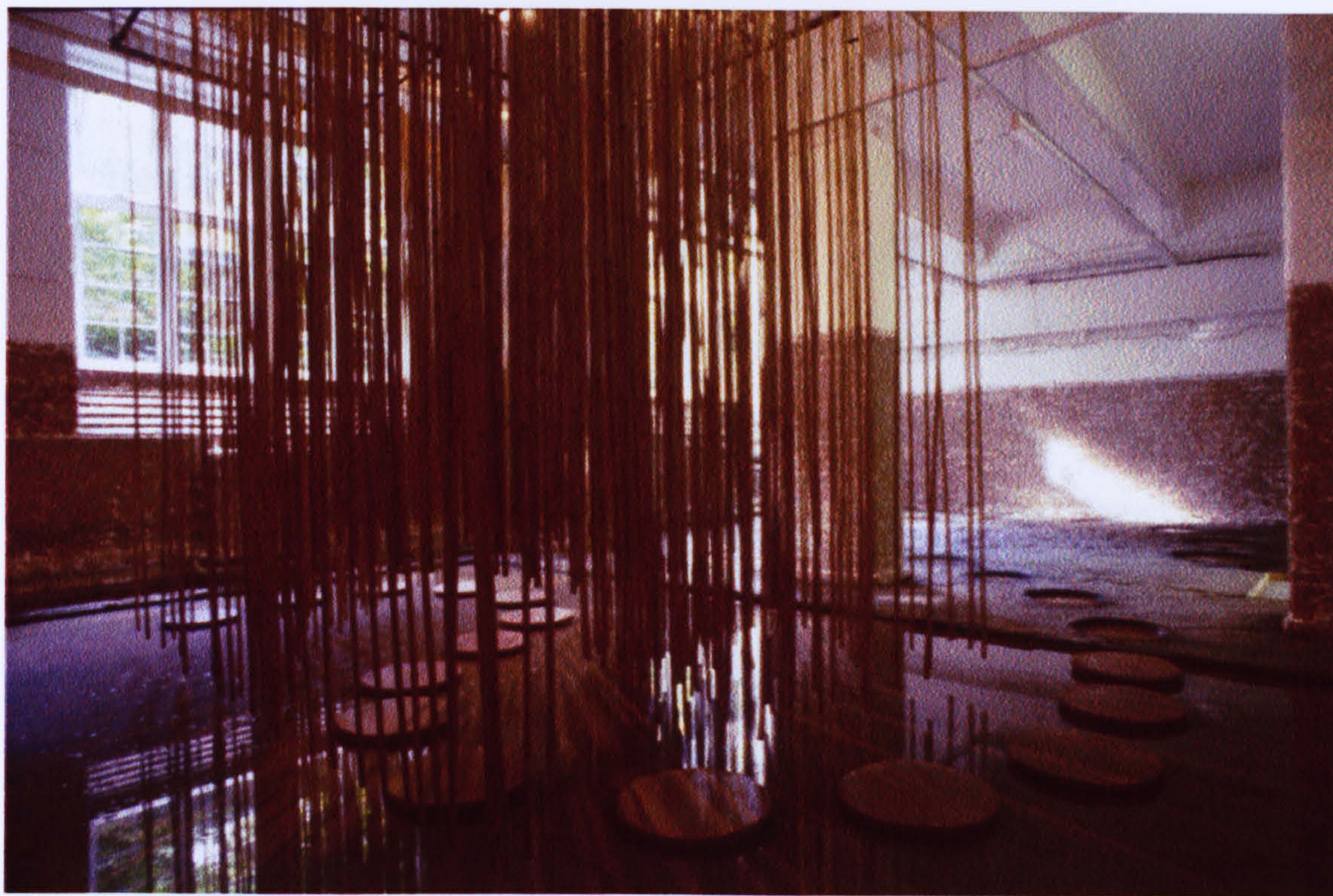
¹⁹⁵ The Dictionary of Art Term, Thames and Hudson Ltd, London, 1984

¹⁹⁶ P. xiv, From Margin to Centre, the Space of Installation art, Julie H. Reiss, the MIT Press Cambridge, London, 1999

Chapter 6

Bright Moon Tender Wind

Following is the story of many events which I have met or shared myself with, the impact of cultural diversity, meeting of different values and experiences which I have learnt in England. These reflections have influenced and inspired to my artistic



Bright Moon Tender Wind

Chapter 6

Bright Moon Tender Wind

Following in the steps of many artists which I have tried to identify myself with, the impact of cultural diversity, recording of different cultural experiences which I have learnt in England, these influences have brought a new language to my artistic practice.

How do I make a contribution to the “Meeting of East and West” as a Chinese contemporary artist? (An outmoded description in the light of the new cultural diversity) To pursue this question further I have had to physically and mentally embrace both East and West. Living through cross-cultural experiences has produced a stronger identification with Chinese traditions which I intend to integrate with the concept of my contemporary life situation and artistic work. The complexity of the relationship of the Universe, Nature and Man (Heaven, Earth and Man) has no direction of “East and West” as is commonly understood.

Throughout this study of Chinese aesthetic theories *yi jing*, *Ch'an* and installation practice, my experience has provided a lot of theoretical data in relation to my contemporary experience and this contemporary experience has led me to re-evaluate Chinese aesthetic theories. *Yi jing* has proved to be the most effective theory for the construction of clear critical and creative concepts. Understanding *yi jing* theory and *Ch'an* philosophy has provided me with particular and useful insights into the art world of today.

The Project 11- Bright Moon Tender Wind

Title: Bright Moon Tender Wind

When: 4th – 21st September 2002

Where: Department of Fine Art, University of Newcastle upon Tyne

Materials: Bamboo, Water, Brick Clay, 14 Stepping Stones (circular ceramic), Metal Meshes, 15 Circular Water Containers, Polythene, Wood

Aims

Installation art usually considers the issues of the chosen materials, spatial environmental engagement and audience participation. Throughout the ten previous projects I have created, I have elaborated upon different areas, such as the materials chosen, the site space and research or focused on the relationship with the artwork and the audience. All the illustrations would demonstrate evidence of my achievement in different issues and investigations.

Therefore, this final project was created following the results of those investigations and combined the influence from the theoretical studies together to create a new project. It was aiming to bring a conclusion to my research in the field of creating an installation with the Chinese aesthetic *yi jing* theory and *Ch'an* concept that would testify to the relationship between artwork and the observer, the observer and the space, the space and artist.

Description:

Site selection

The idea was created a few months prior to finding an appropriate space for this project. To choose a specific location became a very important issue in this project. There were two places I was very interested in using for the creation of this work. One was located in the fourth year painting studio on the first floor of the old building, the other was located just outside the lecture theatre in the Fine Art Department with large windows and a platform for the spectators to sit and observe the work.

The space, which I was looking for would have at least a side of clear window and would connect to the outdoor environment. There was a plan to create a water pond that would cover most of the floor surface in order to make a connection to the outdoor scenery. The decision of using water became difficult. The painting studio was high above the Hatton gallery office and there is an electric facility underneath the lecture theatre. Both of them were too risky to use as my exhibition space for this project. For safety reasons I had to search for another space.

There were several outdoor spaces suggested by my supervisors but I was not really convinced about using them. So I examined the studios in the basement. There were two sculpture studios in the basement of the Hatton gallery which were suitable for this project. Those two studios were connected with each other. There were two large windows in each studio and the lighting conditions were excellent. The outdoor environment would be reflected on the water surface justifying my idea to employ a water pond in this project. Two new sketches were drawn and, I started to check the availability of these studios in the summer. In the first room the floor would be fully covered by 5 centimetres of water, and the other room would be

divided into two different material spaces (water and brick clay carpet) I chose the second plan because of the difficulty of preventing the water running away from the space.

Date and time-scale

The dates of 4th – 21st September were decided upon in discussion with the Director of MFA, the Head of Department, Hatton gallery and students. The date to install my work was agreed upon with the Head of Department. I set a timetable as follows: Further site research – three months ahead of the exhibition; development of form and preparation of materials – two months ahead; installation – one month before the opening; display and documentation – during the exhibition period; remove all the materials – four days after the exhibition.

Project development

I was writing my thesis before I started to process my practical work. The research did inspire me to think deeply about how to create this project and changed my idea of installation; specifically James Turrell's concept of "Environment Art" and his view about the relationship of the integration of participation with the artwork and the observer.

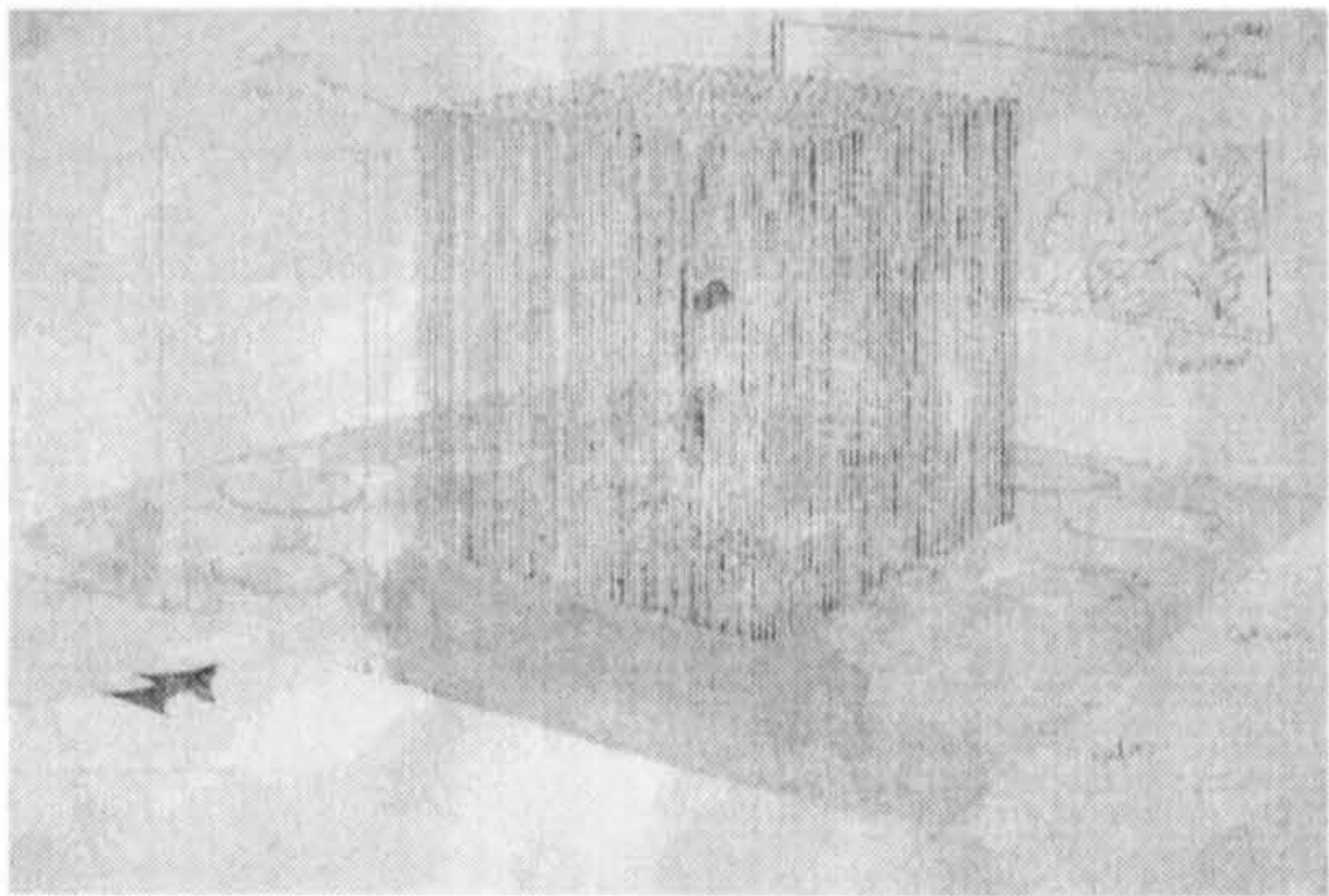
Initially, I used this idea to apply to join the Independent group show in the Liverpool Biennial, which was organised by the "A Foundation"¹⁹⁷. I proposed suspending bamboo from the ceiling. The bamboo is mobilised by the wind and the movement of the audience. The observer is able to walk through the bamboo grove.

¹⁹⁷ An art organisation based in Liverpool.

I also intended to submerge the floor of the space with approximately 5 centimetres of water in which I would place a number of ceramic stepping-stones to act as a path for the audience through the square bamboo environment. A brief image was drawn and enclosed with the application. This image became a very important reference for beginning my plan for this project although it did not succeed in the Liverpool Biennial selection.

Financial support.

I needed to find some sponsor for the materials (Such as clay for stepping stones, bamboo, brick clay, water containers, Polythene, and metal meshes.)



The drawing of the project plan

in order to create this project. I contacted the Art and Business Club and the local Chinese communities for their help. One of my friends Mr. Park and his business partner kindly agreed to assist me with some financial support which was able to cover half of my materials expense.

Stepping-stones.

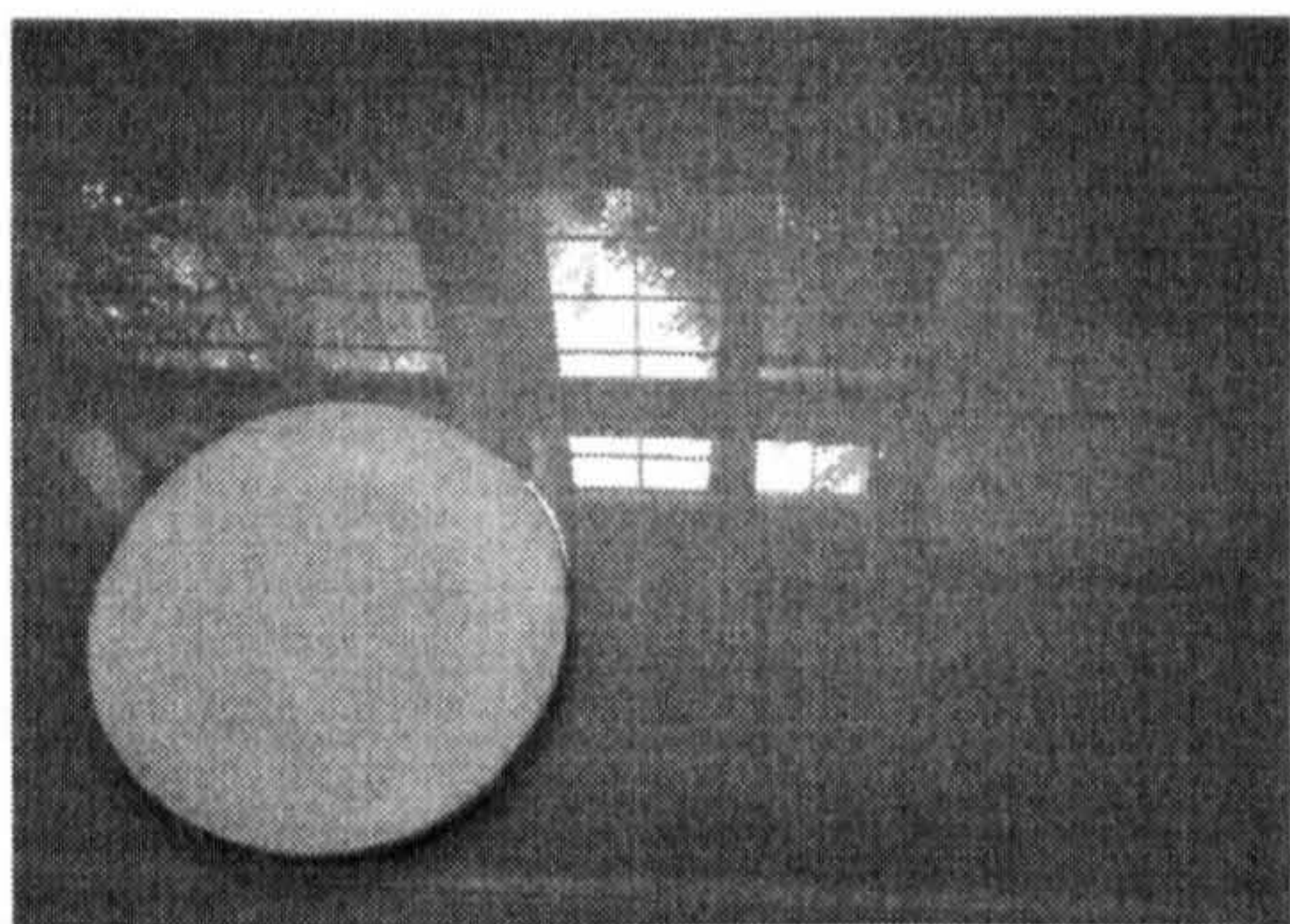
I have no experience in ceramics but I do understand that one cannot always expect one hundred percent results in fired ceramics. The technician reminded me that there was some percentage of difficulty in making any ceramic work. I made a square (50 centimetres template) frame and filled it with clay as if making a tile. Once the tile was made it was then cut into a round shape. The clay needed 10 days to dry before it could go to the kiln. I made two circular plates for an experimental test. The kiln was set up to 1200 degrees and the discs fired over night. The clay

shrunk about 2.5 centimetres whilst in the process of drying and 2.5 centimetres when it was fired. 19 stepping-stones (around 44 centimetres diameter) were made and 3 of them were broken in the process.

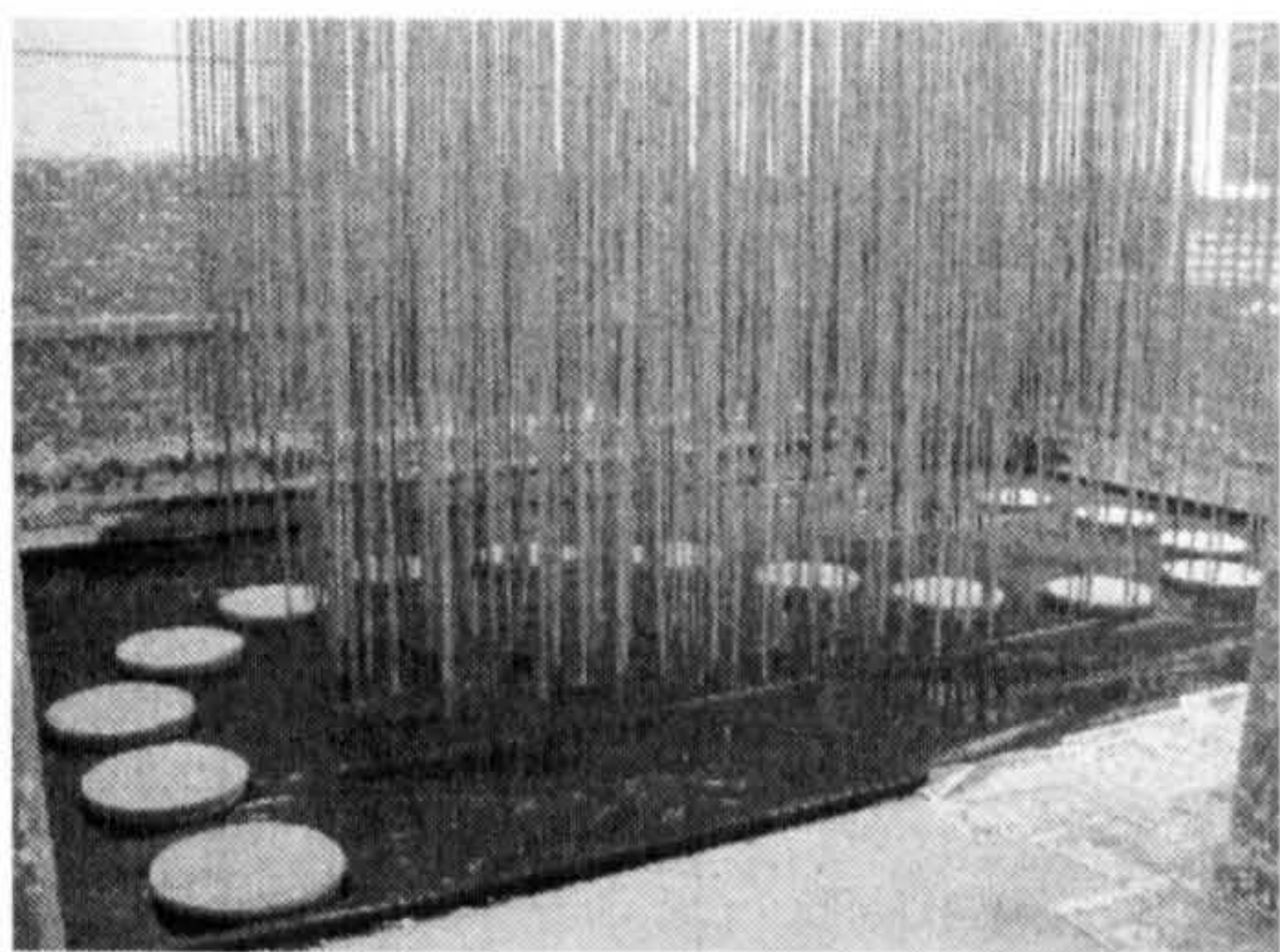


Making a stepping stone

The stones were enough for one person to step on at a time and were carefully arranged to lie in the pond to form a small “S” shape. These stones formed a track to lead the audience through the bamboo grove to experience the atmosphere which I had created for them.



Stepping stone



Small “S” shape

Bamboo.

I contacted several garden centres and art material shops in order to find a bamboo supplier. One of the managers in Cowells Garden Centre agreed to give me a good price and delivered the bamboo to the department. There was one thing about the length of those bamboos I needed to mention here. I planned to get 500, 10-foot long bamboo poles and the garden centre claimed that they could provide all of them when I first approached them. The situation however changed to 250, 10-foot and

250, 8-foot lengths because the supplier had not got enough stock. This was a surprise for me gave me unexpected ideas. A mesh was constructed for suspending the bamboo. There was a small path inside the bamboo grove to allow observers to walk across on 14 stepping-stones in the pool. They could then exit on the other side or return back to the entrance.

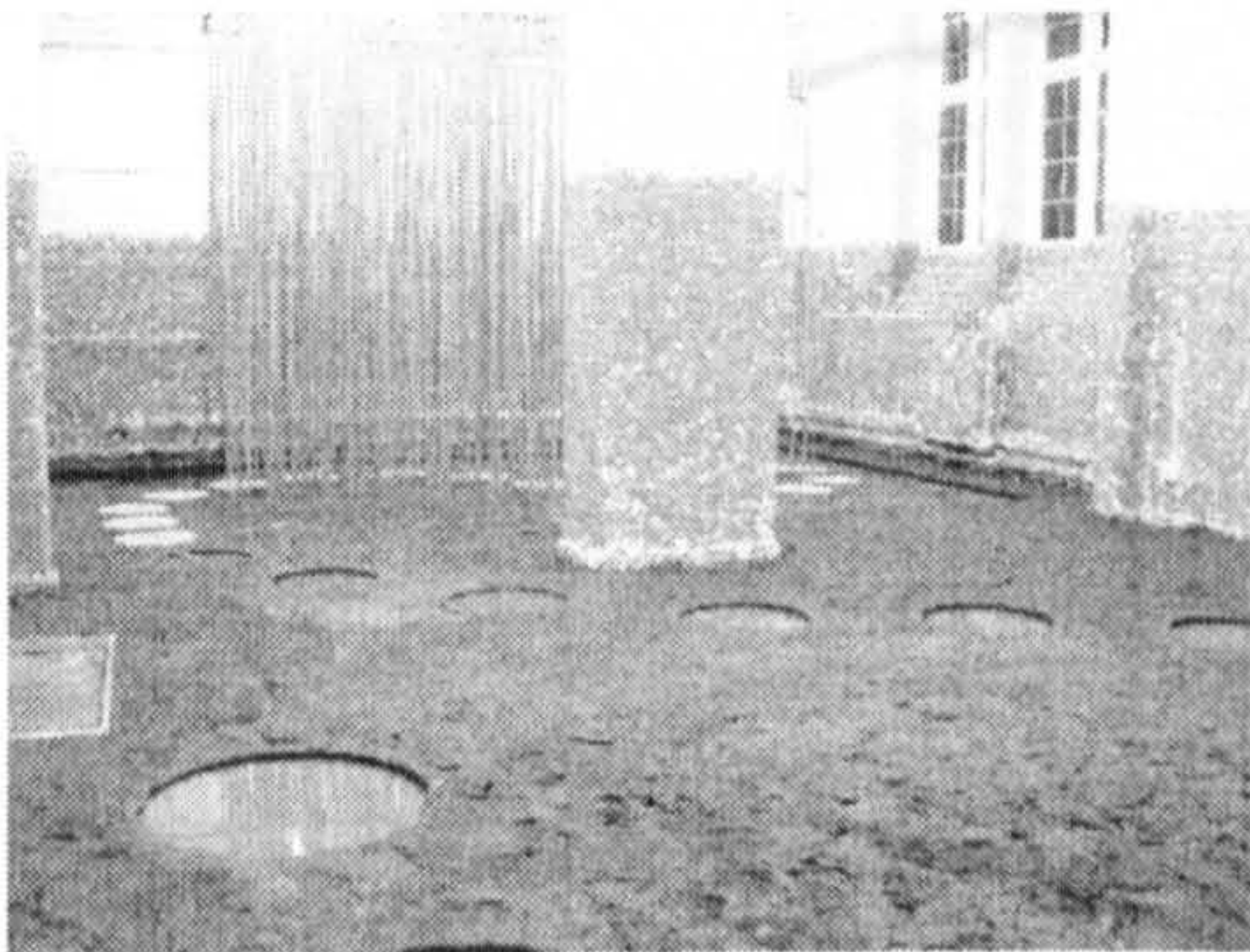
Water pond.

A 2.7 by 4 metre by 6 centimetre deep pond was constructed on the left hand side of the space. Black polythene was used to prevent the water running away. It took three hours to fill with water. I applied a layer of muddy brick clay on the bottom to conceal the polythene from the audience. When the muddy water had settled it then created a big mirror and the reflection established a connection between the internal and external environment.

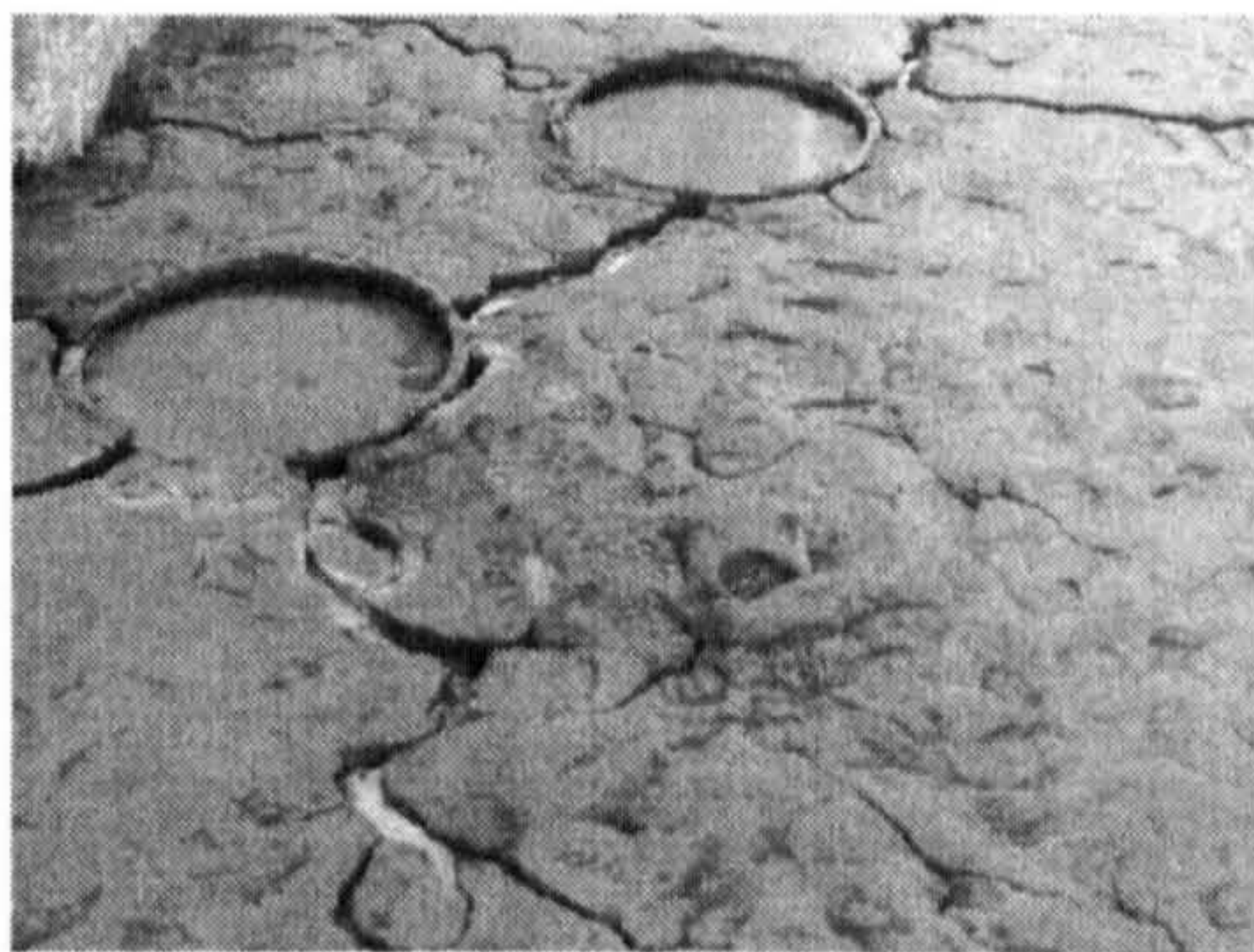
Brick clay.

The entire floor needed to be covered by clay. An image of clay drying was already in my head. A technician helped me to find a brick factory at Birtley (Ibstock Building Products Ltd). The manager was very kind and offered me all the clay for free but I needed to arrange my own transportation. One of my friends helped me to shift some clay back, and we tested it in order to establish the drying properties of the clay and how visually it would change. A small path was built next to the pond and left for few days. The clay started to dry two days later after I placed it on the floor. I quite liked the way the clay started to crack and create natural patterns as in a dry field. A life memory of mine came back to my head – the image of dry rice fields. A wagon was hired and took three journeys to shift all the brick clay back to

the studio. Eventually, the ground floor was covered by nearly 6 tons of brick clay. There was a small brick clay path around the edge of the pond, which allowed the observer to walk around and view the work from different directions. The wet clay trapped every single footprint and gradually dried and made a record of the audiences' participation. And my image of clay cracking from time to time was finally appearing.



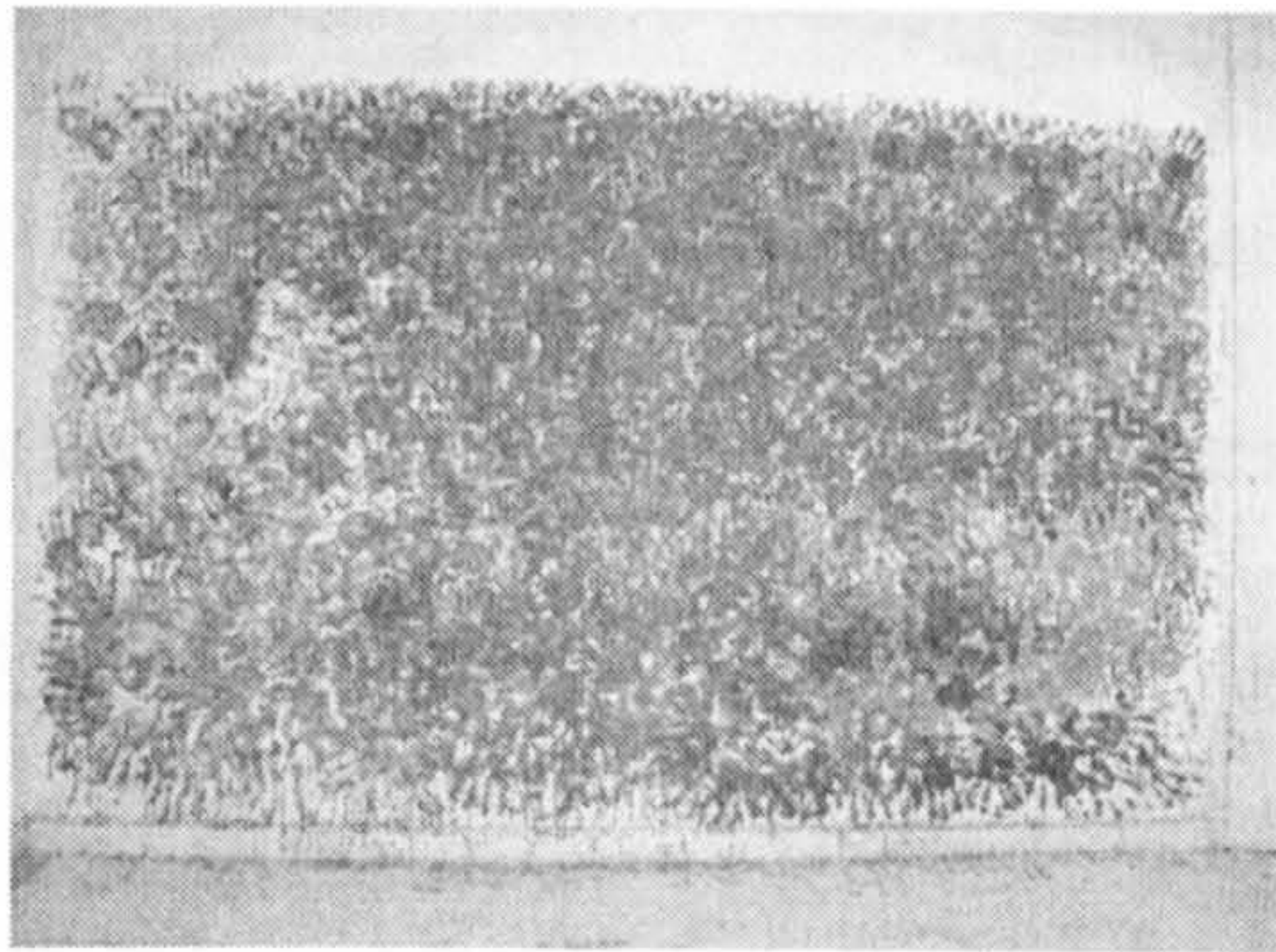
Whole space covered with brick clay



Clay recording the audience's foot prints

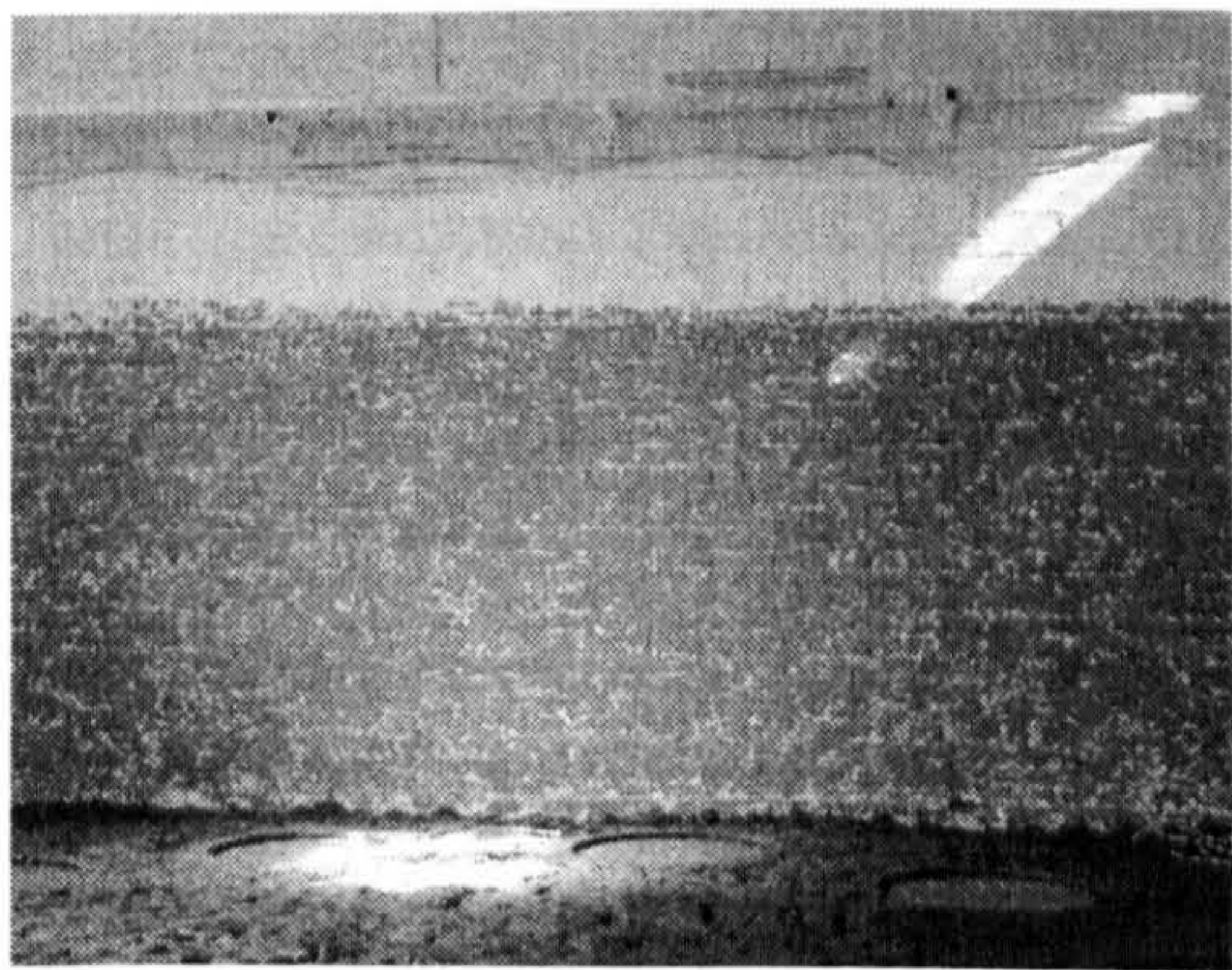
Handprints.

I had previously done an experimental work to print a wall of clay with handprints in my studio, which impressed me. It gave me confidence to employ it in this project too. Off course there were differences



Experimental handprints in studio

between the studio experiment and the new exhibition space. Not only the location but also the scale and texture of the walls were different.



Two layers of clay handprints

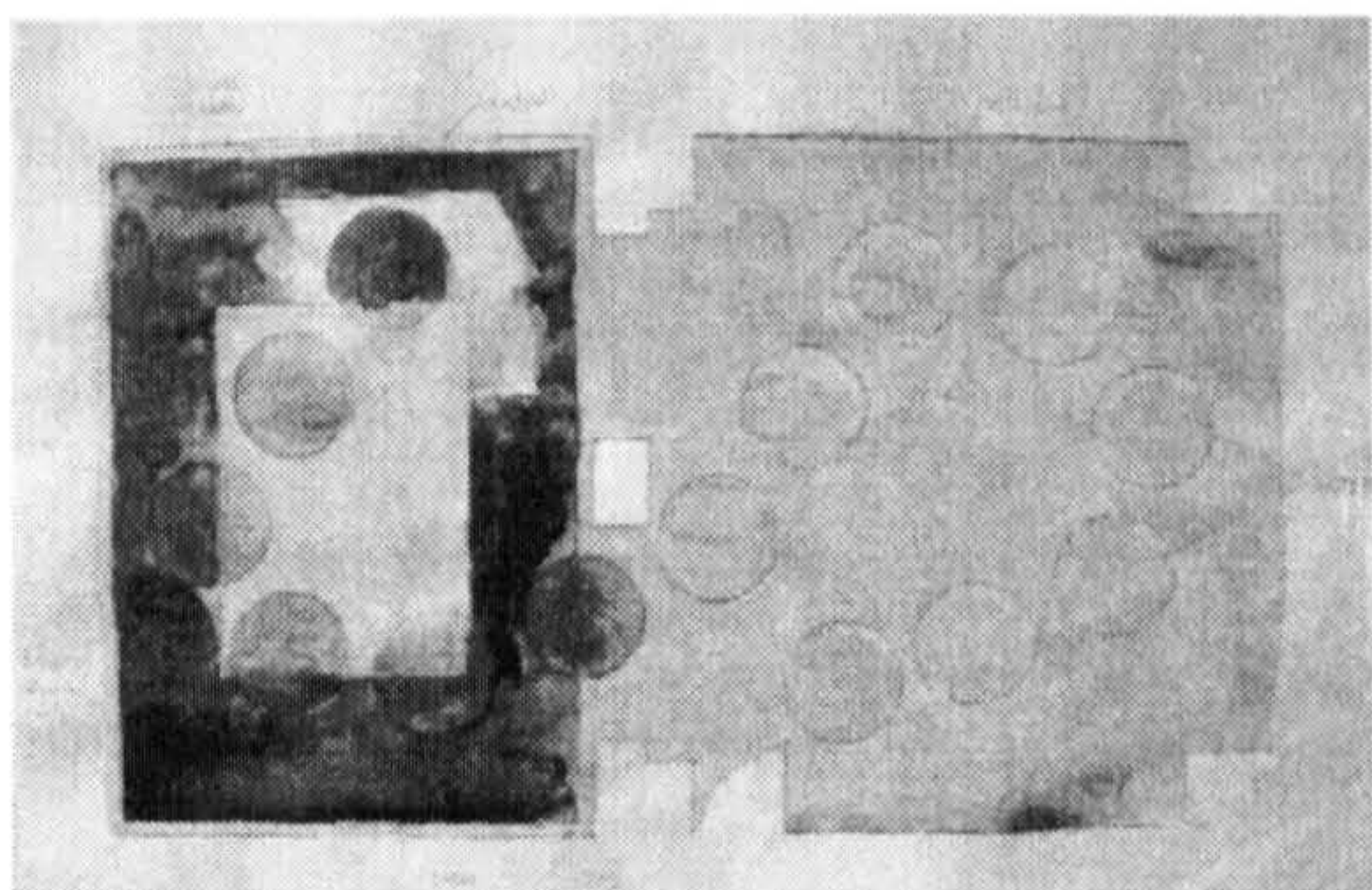
Two earthy colours of clay were employed to cover the surrounding walls in the space. These were applied by my friends and my handprints were impressed into the

clay. Red-brown laying underneath the grey tone of the clay created a depth on the walls. (red-brown clay was used for the stepping-stones, the brick clay turned a grey colour when it dried) The height of the top edge of the handprints on the wall was determined by the level I could comfortably reach. It took me three days to complete the handprints. The two separate studios were transformed into a single large space by those thousands of clay handprints. The dividing wall being unified similarly.

Water containers.

On one side of the space I needed to construct several water dishes. Numbers of paper plates were cut in different sizes and placed on the floor. This helped me to decide the number and the size of containers that I needed to make. 15 wooden containers were made and covered with black bin bags the biggest container was 65 cm gradually reducing 28 cm in diameter. They were filled with water. I mixed the red-brown clay with the water and left it inside the containers. The clay settled on the bottom of the containers and the reflection of the water formed 15 mirrors. A layer of Brick clay covered the edge of the containers to prevent the audience seeing the black bin bags.

The 15 water containers were placed in a circle on the other side of the floor and were connected to the 14 stepping-stones thus forming a big S leading the viewer to a sense of perspective. The S shape presented a concept of Chinese landscape painting composition method and made the space look bigger than it was.



A sketch of floor plan

The whole project took me nearly three months from preparation to completion. The space combined two parts into one big environment. The space was below ground level and it had two large windows. Those

windows were cleaned before the opening. This was a very important preparation to pay careful attention to the whole environment. The sunlight shone directly into the space between 12 and 4 p.m. and the water reflected the sunlight from the wall to the ceiling with gradual movement between these periods.

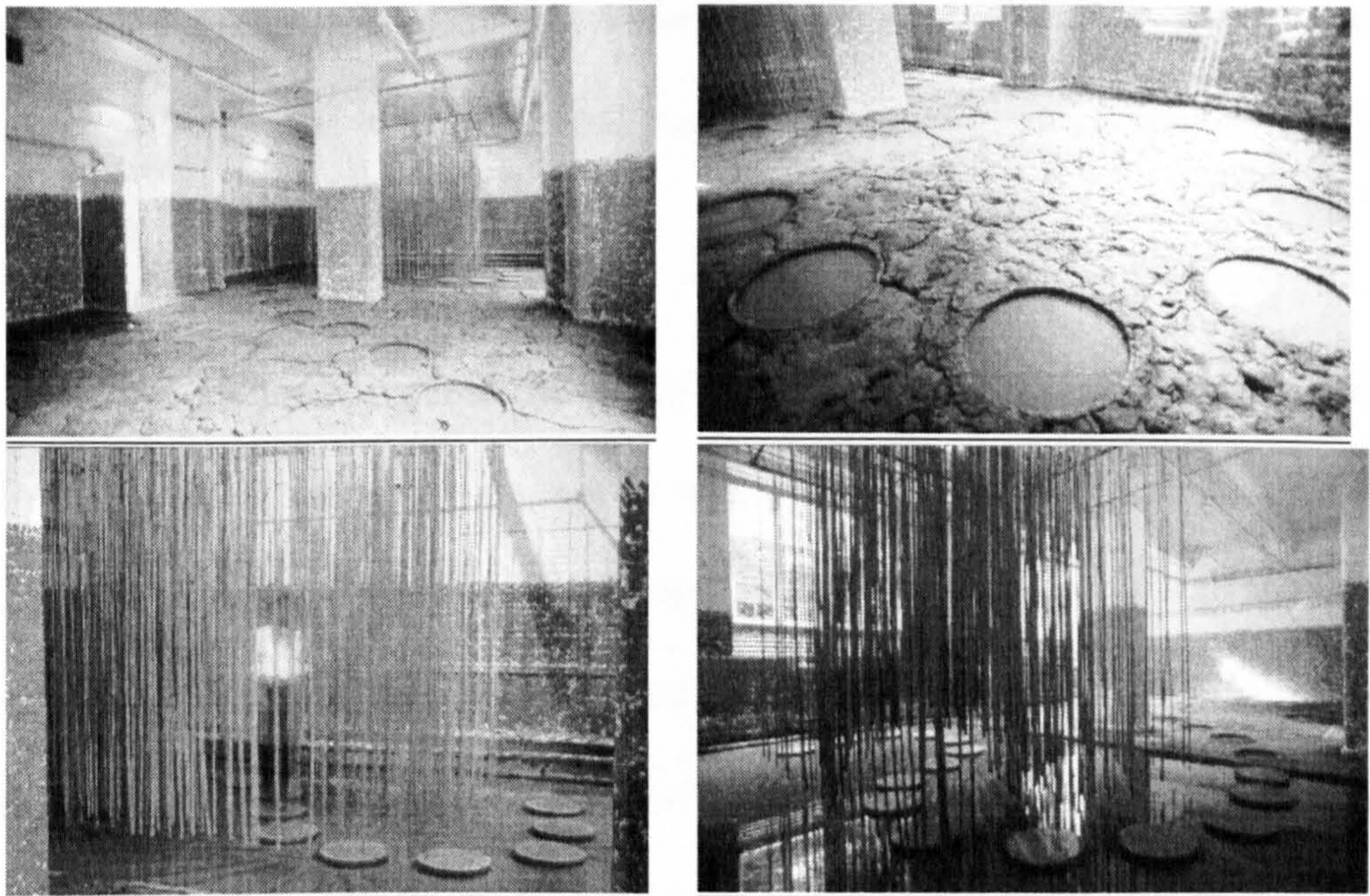
The clay was not totally dry at the beginning of the exhibition. The surface of the wet clay recorded almost every single person's movement and represents their existence in the space. The audience walked directly on the brick clay and the stepping-stones, and so the work constantly changed due to the movement of the observer and was completed by their engagement.

The work turned the space into a different environment. The brick clay separated the space between the indoor and outside world. Once the observer touched the inside of the space he/she was walking into a proposed environment, which I created for one to participate in. The observer was free to walk around, even touch the water, brushing against the bamboo and could stay as long as they wished. The work presented an alternative space for the observer to leave the outside world behind.

Installation

The whole project took me two weeks to complete. Firstly, the mesh was

installed on the ceiling in order to suspend the bamboo. Two different lengths of bamboo were hung from one side to the other. A narrow path was arranged inside the grove to welcome one individual to walk through at a time. A pond was made underneath the grove and the stepping-stones were carefully arranged on the floor to form one-half side of the S shape. Almost six tons of brick clay were then employed to cover most of the studio floor. Two different earthy colours handprints were printed to cover all the walls in the space to unify two areas into a single environment. Fifteen water containers were positioned on the other side of the space and formed a big S with the connection of stepping-stones. Water was mixed with the different kinds of clay. (Pond water mixed with the brick clay, the water containers mixed with the stepping-stones clay) The pond and water containers were filled with water five centimetres deep.



Images of the whole project

A platform was constructed in the entrance to allow the audience to stand and prepare themselves to walk into the environment. Windows were cleaned and a spotlight was installed on the top of the bamboo grove to shine down into the middle of the grove.

Documentation

The work was documented by slides; digital photographs; sound recorder and digital moving images. Please refer to illustrations.

Reflection

A number of thoughts have arisen from the process of installation, and the discussion with the audience.

This project was created in a space which I would describe as “a project in an environmental friendly space”. It provided a very strong character and provided the observer with a big physical impact to arouse their awareness. It did not push the viewer away from the space but offered them a comfortable environment to experience. Rather, the viewer became aware of more and more if they stayed longer in the space.

When the audience entered the site, a small square appeared in front of them. A platform provided spectators a space to stand before they started to move forward. Some of them were afraid to cross the line, as if they sensed that it was forbidden to enter that space. As Mowry Baden stated “...*Perception and action occur in a time continuum. Most actions alter the visual and tactile field sufficiently to make new judgments possible... Action or behaviour) is the only medium that I have to confront and judge my mind's decisions.*”¹⁹⁸ For some of the audience, the platform seemed to become an invisible boundary for them to cross that “line”. Others walked straight into the site to experience the work without hesitation. A new situation then

¹⁹⁸ P. 14, *Blurring the Boundaries*, Installation art 1969-1996, Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, Catalogue coordinated by Lynda Forsha and Louis Grachos, Edited by Anne Farrell, 1999

appeared for the spectators to face. I encouraged them to walk across the viewing platform but a few of them refused my invitation. The self-consciousness of some people stopped them crossing the border. Each observer has his or her own life experience and personality which can not be replaced by another's. Their past experience or history affected their walk into the work.

The traditional Chinese five elements Fire (the stepping stones), Wood (the bamboo grove), Earth (the unfired clay), Metal (the meshes and the clay) and Water (the water in the pond and the water containers) were employed to construct this project. The sixth element — Wind, was waiting for Nature and the observer to bring it to life and the work will then be then completed.

The concave water mirror and the convex stepping-stones platform represented the interaction of the Yin/Yang, Being/Nothing, and the positive/the negative. It was symbolic of the ever-changing Taoist diagram. One arises; the other one is going down. All of these natural forces were integrated with each other and created a new state of harmony. When the surface of the water dishes had settled, the image of a myriad of things arose. The internal installation and the outside world communicated with each other through the reflection at the surface of the rectangular pond and the fifteen round water dishes. These reflections presented immediate information about the changes in the outside world. In the theory of Chinese garden design the external scenery is borrowed and engaged with the interior environment becoming a part of the installation.

Direct handprints recorded the period of my working process in the space and represented my existence in the space and the power of human strength. The scale and number of the handprints was impressive and had an impact on visual contact

with the audience. One observer described the hand printings being like someone who has been trapped and wants to escape from the limited space. Alternatively, a description of child like fun and experimentation would be closer to what I would like to express.

Most observers enjoyed the experience of walking through the bamboo grove. That was something they were not expecting would happen within the work. The movement of passing through the grove and interaction of making sound with the bamboo were another important intention in this project. When the bamboo was pushed by the audience it then produced a wonderful soundtrack. A loud sound represented a large size or heavy touch. Comparatively, a small sound corresponded to the small scale of the body or the carefulness of walking through. A Few viewers described that they could feel calm directly from the work. And this poetic expression arose from the involvement with the work metaphorically.

For me as the person who created this project, it was a challenge. The sensation of calm, peace and *Ch'an* philosophy (the unity of Man and Nature, the self experience) were not a simple thing to pretend to represent. The poetic and beautiful *yi jing* (The unity of the subjective emotion and objective phenomenon, the artistic creation and expression and the audience appreciation, completion and participation), which I would like to described and present, were visualised with the sound, temperature, materials, the space and the environment. The removal of the work from the space made an ending for this project but also created a new beginning for my next project.

My own observation: 01/09/2002

Entering into the space I observed things differently as the clay cracked from time to time.

The light changed every second.

The clay cracked into unpredictable patterns.

The water connected the space.

When the sunlight shone into the water it produced a reflection of sunlight. I can see the sun rising from the pattern of the earth wall and gradually move into the sky space.

What I observe will be different each time from what the observer has seen previously.

I await the moonlight entering the space which hopefully will be around 21st September.

The camera's battery has gone. I am just able to take another light picture. I am timing the shots and will wait until the sunlight arrives at the right time, right space.

It is a pleasurable thing to spend hour after hour in this space. It is an essential space and it is not dressing up as a "to please eyes" work. It is a beautiful work and also a purified work.

I am waiting for the clay to dry, there are four heaters placed in different areas. I

hope the majority of the clay will dry on time before the opening. Steam has come out from the ground. I may have put the heater too close to the surface. I need to move the heater again.

The water mirrors reflect the light to everywhere in the space. The movement of the sun rules it.

I may lose my patience but there is nothing I can do about it as it takes time to dry, it is time consuming.

Conclusion

● When one walks into an installation, the moment of contact is when one starts to notice the work. From the turning of space and position, it affects one's observation. His/Her understanding and experience are changing in every second of attachment to life. Some reactions rise, some are falling, some are born and some are gone. These feelings are changing constantly. In Modernity, a site-specific installation, the space redefines the observer's status and he/her is free to interpret by oneself. As Brian O'Doherty states, "*Space now is not just where things happen; things make space happen.*"¹⁹⁹ Space for the audience to feel, to touch, to participate, to experience and so on... As artist Guang-Yu Li stated that "*changes of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and mind would influence one's emotion and mentality. Thus one's mind is changed by the phenomena.*"²⁰⁰ It is the observer's self-reflection of the ever changing phenomena as well as the artist's intention that brings about this change in emotion and mentality.

¹⁹⁹ Inside the White Cube, the ideology of the gallery Space, Brian O'Doherty, Expanded Edition, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1986

²⁰⁰ Interview with artist Guang- Yu Li, 20/01/2000

- I was always trying to use natural materials to create my projects. From my first project using charcoal, bracken, wood, Chinese ink and paper through to the clay and bamboo of this project, the materials provide a rich sense of the organic gesture.

- Work encompassing participatory events is an important issue in part of my creation and intended to challenge the notions of locality and the audience's perception of the spaces that surround them. It is a physical and mental experimental exercise.

- This project has revealed the interactions between individuals and the environment which I created. My aim was to create a work with natural materials in an environmental friendly site-specific space that engaged and interacted with the audience. My creation was inspired by those concepts such as: Chinese aesthetic theory – *yi jing* – the self experience of wisdom; Western contemporary environment and installation art concepts (the perception of spaces, the participating of audience and the notions of the local environment); and the emptiness of the natural environment. It is speechless but has the sounds and voice of its own materials (the tactile quality of the clay, the sound of the bamboo and so on) which could be fully experienced.

- A strong heritage of traditional Chinese culture and *Ch'an* Buddhist experience will always occupy my own thoughts. The experience of living in England has also changed my own conception of creating an idea. These influences give me an infinite source of inspiration and allow me to create new artwork.

In the beginning of my study, I saw a clear frame around my work. The frame

was a phantom vision, which led me to find the truth of Nature. I found myself a way in through the entrance, but I lost my path soon after I entered the door. The mountain and water are clear but that is not the mountain and water which I am looking for.

The mountain is mountain, and therefore the water is the water. The project brought me into a higher state and for the first time a “real mountain and water” appeared in my mind. The nature of the mountain and water, which deeply influenced my own imagination, inspired me to create an artwork – a unity of the audience, the work and myself.

Conclusion

Ch'an teaches us that “Bright Moon and Tender Wind” are the most common phenomena we experience in our everyday life. There are numerous creations in history which describe the beauty of the bright moon and tender wind. For example the Chinese artist and poet, Wang Wei writes...

*“Rain freshly fallen on the bare mountain; the air full of
autumn in the dusk. A bright moon peers between the pines; a
clear stream bubbles over the stones.”*²⁰¹

This poem describes the *yi jing* of deep autumn and brings the beauty of natural phenomenon to the fore of our imagination. For a person who practices *Ch'an* Buddhism, the Moon is symbolic of enlightenment and a finding of the truth. Words, images and concepts are the finger of “The Pointed Hand” of the *Ch'an* priest and

²⁰¹ P. 350, 300 T'ang poems, translated by Innes Herdan, Far East Book Co. Taipei, 1987

are the direction for the questioner to seek inwardly towards their true self. The whole phenomenon of pointing at the moon is a spiritual study. To see the ultimate truth, one has to experience it personally. No forms can fully describe it.

During the period of cross-cultural development, the original Indian *Ch'an* wisdom has been gradually challenged by Chinese philosophies and evolved into Chinese *Ch'an* Buddhism, retaining the same essence but with a distinctly different flavour.

It is much the same as the development of *yi jing* theory. *Ch'an* Buddhism's idea of emptiness combined with *yi jing* theory affected Chinese arts' development in painting, poetry, sculpture, landscape garden design, and architecture etc. The concepts of *yi jing* and *Ch'an* philosophy helped the concerns of Chinese art to develop from an interest in physical phenomena towards the aesthetic depiction of an inwardly abstract spiritual state. *Yi jing* is an emotional and spiritual description of Nature that transcends Form. *Ch'an's* love of Nature is also full of passion; its aim is to merge with Nature and to love it. The priests present their aesthetic realization of "ten thousand things" and perceive direct Satori from the harmonisation of life with Nature. The emptiness of *yi jing* reflects the depth of the artist's imagination and creativity as well as inspiring his/her observation.

*"Detached from the appearances while in the midst of appearances, and be detached from emptiness while in the midst of emptiness, then you will not be lost inwardly or outwardly."*²⁰²

²⁰² P. 47, Key Events. The Sutra of Hui-Neng, Hui-Neng, translated by Thomas Cleary, Shambhala Publications, Inc. Boston, 1998

To be detached from any form and to realise the ultimate truth is what *Ch'an* Buddhism has always emphasized, to go beyond the appearance of forms to internalise the art, the Tao and intrinsic nature.

Thoughts and creative consciousness can be recognized in artistic creations. The physical images are transformed into reality by the artists' thoughts and structure of their work. In the process of creation many artists have transformed material or physical form into an access point of a direct experience of realisation. The works they create have uncovered this invisible space and they have reconstructed this into a visible reality. The real creation provides a metaphysical evaluation with the infinity of the universe. The *yi jing* they create offers us a phenomenon of their emotions and allows us to observe the world together. The concepts of space, time and interpretation have been transformed or constructed by the artists' own thoughts and realisation into different forms. In the process of form-creation many artists have directed their attention towards Asian philosophy such as Taoism, *Ch'an* Buddhism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Tibetan Buddhism and so on. These Eastern philosophies, especially *Ch'an* became a popular concept in the West during the middle of the twentieth century and have provided many rich resources for artists in the West to refine their perception of space and time. These concepts give a new direction for the Western artist to move away from the object and become more in tune with nature and experience.

Before and after the Second World War, communications between West and East became very close and intimate. Since *Ch'an* spread into the West in the middle of the twentieth century, Eastern philosophy has become a most influential subject in America and Western Europe. The Westerner easily accepted these new concepts

and Eastern spirituality has widely influenced Western culture. The quality of influence and understanding has been much increased compared with developments in the early nineteenth-century. During the 1950s to 1970s, artists paid a lot of attention to these new concepts. The paintings of the Abstract Expressionists, the light sculptures of James Turrell and the new sculptural development of works by artist Richard Serra (who stated that “*the biggest break in the history of sculpture in the twentieth century was to remove the pedestal.*”²⁰³), facilitated a shift away from the rarefied space of the “pedestal and gallery” towards the urban space and natural environment. Symbols of Eastern spiritual philosophy can also be found in the environmental Earth works of Richard Long. Moreover, Hiroshi Teshigahara was in a different situation hovering between both East and West, and had various preferences and chose “installation” as his medium to express his understanding of Eastern philosophy and Western culture. These artists have moved away from object, towards a spiritual interpretation of Nature and developed an experience of their inner perception of the cosmos. Their works have merged with Oriental content and perception in a different realisation.

These artists choose different areas to develop their work with Eastern concepts and create multifarious experiences and understandings of space in participating formats. The *yi jing* they create is tuned towards the internal state of a physical phenomenon and interacts with the viewer naturally. Environmental artists use natural materials and construct work with their own concepts. In installation art, the materials and space manipulation invite the audience to participate within the artist’s creation represented in a specific format. These artists provide audiences with an opportunity to experience the inner state of oneself and the unity of Man and Nature.

²⁰³ P. 170. Richard Serra, Writings, Interviews, the University of Chicago press, Chicago, 1994

In Taoism and *Ch'an* there is no separation between the emptiness and material world, subject and object. If one focuses on one pinpoint of Richard Long one will miss the opportunity of observation and self-awareness. If one only pays attention to one part of the sky window he/she might lose the chance to observe the changing phenomena within the field in view. With full concentration, one can really appreciate a direct experience of the environment similarly to that which Hiroshi Teshigahara created in his bamboo installations.

As an artist Guang-Yu Li explained that Eastern philosophy is more concerned with spirit which includes the primordial universe and nature.²⁰⁴ *Ch'an* identification with nature has always been stressed by its masters. The *Ch'an* art can only help us and bring us to enter the door of perception as well as the art created by artists such as James Turrell, Richard Long, Hiroshi Teshigahara etc. They give us a direction to perceive the true emptiness of our own essential nature from the phenomena which they created. How deeply can we understand our true nature through the experience of the work that they created? It all depends on individual experience and perception. Nature will never stop to provide us with an opportunity to see the truth beyond appearances. Art is the connection for both internal and external worlds, and it is there to guide us.

In the meeting of West and East, the Eastern philosophy has provided a different prospect for these Western artists. *Ch'an* philosophy, especially, gives these artists a lesson to learn and allows them to explore their creation. *Ch'an* is to experience oneself, not see or analyse. A high quality of *yi jing* has united the creations by these artists and is there for us to experience and observe. The forms are the materials for

²⁰⁴ My interview with artist Guang-Yu Li, Taipei, 20/01/2000

us to connect to the cosmos, as our body is the material to unite our spirit with the external world. All the forms will never be completed and answer our questions until we go to the centre of the form and find the answer ourselves. If one wants to understand *Ch'an* and *yi jing*, one needs to feel it directly without any attachment or deliberation. It is a primary *Ch'an* concept that no intense learning will lead one to the ultimate truth.

In the beginning of this thesis, I raised a question about whether the Chinese aesthetic concept of *yi jing* and *Ch'an* philosophy might determine approaches to the form and content of my practice within the field of environmental installation, with particular regard to the relationships between the artist, the audience, the artwork and the engagement of all of these with the space. I was also hoping to discover whether my resulting artwork could produce a direct interpretation of *yi jing* and *Ch'an*.

Throughout different practical projects and by undertaking the study of *yi jing*, *Ch'an*, Chinese painting, *Ch'an* gardens, the history and development of East-West cultural influence and by looking at certain works by Turrell, Long and Teshigahara, I have tried to identity myself with, the impact of cultural diversity between West and East. I am influenced by contemporary Western and traditional Eastern art and these influences have created a new pattern to my artistic practice. I have tried to redefine my traditional Chinese aesthetic concepts and theory, especially with regard to *yi jing* and *Ch'an*, and by combining aspects of contemporary installation and environmental art have created a new possibility of bringing the notion of universe, nature, audience, space and my own creation together.

At the end of the *Bright Moon Tender Wind* research project, I achieved the

integration of creating a poetic *Ch'an yi jing* with environmental installation practice. *Yi jing* and *Ch'an* provided me with a simple but sophisticated resource for this integration. I have transferred my intention (*yi*) of creating an environmentally friendly installation (*jing*) in a contemporary setting.

For all my recent projects I have used materials such as ink, wood, clay, bamboo, charcoal, water and ceramics to create a *yi jing* environment which connects with the past. This *yi jing* emotion is transferred to the present time through the audience's participation, and carried by them into the future.

The philosophy of *Ch'an* has influenced the past, exists in the present and it will influence the future. Perhaps exploring *yi jing* will create new forms but the ancient wisdom will never be far away from our present environment.

Appendices

Transcription of Interviews

Interview with artist Guang-Yu Li

Everything in the world is constantly changing. Everything is created on the foundation of impermanence (Anitya).

Time: 7:30pm, 01/August/ 2000

Where: Sculptural lecturer Lee, Kuang-Yu's Studio

This was my second visit to sculptor Kuang Yu's studio. The studio seemed new and bigger than on my previous visit, which was during the daytime when the light was brighter. There were many finished sculptures, half-finished artworks and some tools standing on the pedestal, placed on the ground or in the corner of the studio. The night was very quiet with some insects singing outside in the garden. That is the scenery one can always experience in Taiwan during summer.

Firstly, I explained what I have done since the last time I visited him. I showed him images of the Heart Sutra and Fairyland projects.

C.C: Explained Fairy Land and Heart Sutra projects.

Heart Sutra

I haven't really finished my *Heart Sutra* project. *Ch'an* is a philosophy, which the viewers could experience through my writing and its environment. I imagined the viewer walking into the space and feeling the serenity of the writings and the *yi jing* I created. The project is aiming to provide the audience with opportunity to experience a peaceful, contemplative feeling from the depth of their minds/hearts. I planned to write the Heart Sutra on a few long rice paper sheets and suspend them from the ceiling to form a concentric circle screen. I also planed to set up a light in the centre so that when the viewers walk into the circle their shadows will appear on the screen temporarily. The screen will then become clear again when the viewers leave the room, leaving only the writing, the screen panels and the wall. Shadow is a virtual image, but Heart Sutra is a substantial object. Virtual image and concrete object are working together in an harmonic existence.

Fairyland

Secondly, I continued to explain the project of *Fairyland*. The artwork was set up in Chopwell woods which is to the south-west of Newcastle upon Tyne. All of the material was picked from the local area; such as bracken, wood sticks and bramble. There were three bracken screens and five wood balls placed in different areas to present things constantly falling to the forest floor – to earth. Each of the three screens were given a different size of hole, in order to provide a vantage viewpoint to view the surroundings from different directions. In particular, the triangular screen is where an observer can watch the pine trees, sky and the passing clouds. The five balls were positioned in different places around the screens. Two bracken balls seemed to flow up just above the green sea. When the wind blew, the balls were moved by the green waves. One of the balls was a wooden frame encircled by bramble. The other two were made from tree branches.

G.Y: Man won't leave any evidence when he goes into a space with the Heart Sutra on the wall. His shadow represents emptiness, and the characters represent fullness. The fullness and the emptiness exist in harmony.

C.C: I was trying to employ the local materials to create my artwork. I created a triangular net and left an open space in the middle to allow the audience to view the surroundings. For example, the clouds passing over the trees, the trees waving as the wind blew. These ideas combined with *Ch'an* garden design and *Ch'an* philosophy to create the artwork. However, there is one thing that worries me. Am I going in the right direction with my work?

G.Y: Why do you think this way?

C.C: I am worried that I cannot successfully express my concepts through my creation.

G.Y: Actually, most of the time they are not easily fully expressed. Life is divided into many different aspects because human behaviour and the premise of living are usually categorized. The absolute division of life will become very real and it belongs to the material world.

C.C: Then, what about my work, e.g. *Heart Sutra* and *Fairy Land*? Do they belong to material world?

G.Y: It belongs to the "absolute world".

C.C: Why is it called "absolute world"?

G.Y: The *Heart Sutra* is an absolute world and not a dual world. It cannot be changed because it is a "Sutra". Human life is changing. Change cannot be called "Sutra".

C.C: According to what you previously explained, does my concept combined with the existence of the audience (audience's shadow) become an impermanent

concept?

G.Y: It depends on the angle of ones viewpoint.

C.C: Why?

G.Y: From the reference point of “a varying landscape” one can make an evaluation from all variations and find an established permanent state and then the landscape will become permanent. But, because all permanent states are changing, one will understand clearly the essence/intrinsic nature of impermanence. There is not a single place which is permanent. Everything is changing. Everything is created from this foundation of impermanence. This is the material world where we belong. It is in one’s fundamental thoughts which are not disrupted by the outside changing phenomena and the changes of our six senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch and mind). It will not be changed by outside phenomena and this means it is a metaphor for monism.

G.Y: Are all concrete objects changing all the time? Someone hit me and my emotion rose then reacted back to that person. This is the dualistic world. I perceive that scenery is beautiful and inspires me toward wonderful feeling. This feeling and being angry is the same thing but different phenomena. These phenomena are different and the inspiration or stimulation is different. One prefers one phenomenon more then the other. There is no absolute in the world of human beings. The world of God is absolute. Man will become absolute because Man can become a God. Man and God will always fight with each other. Man is complete with himself for a whole life. Man fights between rational ideal and failure. For example, I would like to express my idea of this beautiful scenery but I am not able to do so. Thus, it creates questions and failure but there is still hope. This kind of behaviour has the same essential nature. There is only wise or unwise in our world.

C.C: Is this what Buddhism describes, where there is only one wisdom but it has thousands of various training methods?

G.Y: Our thoughts not only consider a single thought because everything has an equal opportunity. In Buddhism this is called “majority equality”. There is no eminent and humble. Buddhism emphasizes “every creature has a Buddha’s mind”. There is no eminent and humble between grass and Rembrandt’s painting but different levels of reading. “*One dabbles in things with a spontaneous reading without too much thinking*”. One will become rigid without working in this way.

C.C: One idea I had was to use a piece of large charcoal covered with Chinese rice paper and I used painting pigment to write the Heart Sutra. I then used Gold Leaf to decorate the surface and placed charcoal around the large charcoal on the

ground.

G.Y: I do have a doubt. We can manipulate our ideas by the method of pictorial imagery, including the material. The material itself has its own cultural identity and meaning. There is a basic system/premise/question you need to be aware of when being an artist. The new form will be created when the way you treat or view the world becomes changed. Otherwise, you will stay at the previous position. What is different between the styles of life and the method of emotion?

C.C: Is it the interaction between the creator and the audience?

G.Y: It is the creator's personal behaviour. You can use all Chinese cultural materials to create an artwork but at some point attempt to change the type of material– to pick the materials which have the cultural meaning of the locality. Westerners do not really understand how to use rice paper, calligraphy, ink and so on. So, you have to rethink where or what your position is now? Further more, what is the reason these kinds of materials can be acceptable in the creation? Why do we choose these materials in particular?

C.C: Do you really think there is an Ultimate truth existing in our world?

G.Y: It depends on the level because we exist in a single line. This line is the place of right and wrong.

C.C: I worry that audience put a label of “Chinese made artwork” on me when I thought about the project which we just mentioned earlier in our conversation.

G.Y: Yes, you will be.

C.C: I do not feel very comfortable with it.

G.Y: Most Masters were labelled first then became Masters. There is no exception. So, what is the reason? That is the point. You have to think about it.

G.Y: You like the Japanese *Ch'an* garden very much, don't you? Why has the Japanese *Ch'an* garden inspired you?

C.C: There are some dry landscapes gardens which only allow a priest or gardener to go in. The audience are not able to walk into the sand to participate in the space and observe the space from inside to the outside environment. The audience are only able to sit on the bench and view the garden from what I call “outside the essential”. From my point of view I would like to create an artwork with a Chinese garden concept which the audience can walk into and view the work from different angles. I need to study the Chinese garden further.

G.Y: That depends on the manipulation, and it isn't necessary to connect with the nature of art. There must be someone who is able to walk into the space and view it from inside towards outside and the whole environment.

C.C: The garden and the surroundings exist together in a state of harmony.

G.Y: Basically, the Japanese *Ch'an* garden has a *Ch'an* mind with extremely

Confucian concepts.

C.C: How is that?

G.Y: The main strength of the garden comes from Man's mind. Manipulating the stones into the absolute right position. The ingenuity that rivals the work of God which come from Man's mind. You can find the extreme performance of Man's mind in the garden. The meaning of extreme is just like finding gold in various minerals. The aim is to find the purest object from the majority of objects. What one requires is the quality of purity. It is very minimal. If one is to perform extremely minimally in an extremely minimal situation then one would be able to meet God (Nature) within the creation. There is fullness inside the essential of this creation. There is no mistake on the essential points of these thoughts. One can see the ultimate attainment of heart and objects in Nature. The gardener trims that tree. It was not trimmed today or yesterday. Actually it was done in the past maybe 20 years in order to create that shape. Maybe the gardener's grandfather trimmed it and past it on to new generations.

C.C: When I visited the Japanese *Ch'an* garden, I saw a gardener was trimming the tree leaves, the action just like being *Ch'an*. It was so natural.

G.Y: He is an artist not a gardener.

C.C: I think the gardener was a *Ch'an* master.

G.Y: I certainly don't know if he had that kind of ability. *Ch'an* 禪 has a simple explanation that "indicates" 示 the "simplicity" 單. The meaning of what is "simplicity" is dependent on your personal interpretation. One has to find a way to explain what he is trying to explain. "*One dabbles in things with a spontaneous reading*". It depends on how you fix yourself into a position. For example, the position of a Japanese *Ch'an* garden. I mention this because of your interest in the Japanese *Ch'an* garden. But I felt that your idea is not really focussed on this?

C.C: I am more interested in the spiritual area but what kind of creation format would be able to express the spiritual level.

G.Y: It depends on what kind of thing or form corresponds with spirituality. For example, what does the butcher correspond with? A knife cuts into the meat and slices organs beautifully. The pig died spontaneously without feeling pain. To butcher a pig would give income, but what will it tell you? These same actions have different results and reactions with different butchers. One may be not interested in money alone.

C.C: It is just like the story of "Butcher Cutting Ox" in Taoist wisdom.

G.Y: For example, a garden designer will not butcher a pig without consideration. He knows how to butcher the pig perfectly after thousands of times. The action of

cutting is matched with an extreme level of spirituality. What he seeks is perfection. What do you think one will become when he reaches the level of perfection?

C.C: Will he persist in extreme focus and thus forget to jump out of the circle? (ie. forget to gain insight from the outside)

G.Y: It depends on the person's own fate as to whether he is able to jump out of the circle. Not everyone is able to jump out of the circle.

C.C: When we mention rationality, is *Ch'an* a non-rational concept?

G.Y: *Ch'an* is neither a rational nor irrational concept. *Ch'an* is something unexpected. Non-rational or irrational can be unexpected. It depends on your observation and realisation. What do you realise? To realise a new thing and this new world is something the artist is always dreaming about to pass on towards a higher level. Is such a revaluation happening to the new form or new concept? So, no matter what the situation is in this world, one has to participate in the idea and find out the reason to establish the concept. It is hard for someone to find out the True Self. If one is simple then it is easy for him to open his mind. We are often too restrained. If an artist reaches a higher level of creativity then he can open up more and express himself better.

C.C: Buddhism once taught "let it go".

G.Y: 'Get free from any attachment', let thought go free, let the emotion be free. One feels happy once the thought is free from any attachment.

C.C: Life is hard. Everything is hard.

G.Y: This thought has to be restrained. It is called "subversion", traditionally it creates a new vision of art forms in the modern art context. The position of Marcel Duchamp is very important in modern art. He has subverted the meaning of traditional culture. There is a question in this context. Is *Ch'an* subversive? The person who has the ability to subvert the concept has grasped the meaning of *Ch'an* and sees art as a totally different subject.

C.C: Sometimes, I doubt my creation. Does my artwork have *Ch'an*? It is hard to define the existence of *Ch'an* in my artwork.

G.Y: This is a very complicated subject because you are involved with *Ch'an*. There is no one who really knows the meaning of *Ch'an* in the world. How difficult it is, because you choose *Ch'an* to be part of your creation.

C.C: How about giving it a different name instead of *Ch'an*?

G.Y: The market and the truth are two totally different things. What you think belongs to the market. What you want to discover belongs to another subject. But there may be a conjunction point between these two. It depends on your organization.

C.C: With reference to art and *yi jing*, I would sometimes like to emphasize the value of *yi jing* above *Ch'an* and try to find an extreme *yi jing*.

G.Y: Extreme *Yi jing*? You need to think, what is extreme? Everyone does have *yi jing*, the butcher has the *yi jing* of butchering the pig. There is an important question behind the point of how are you going to translate the value of *yi jing*? What we have been discussing is starting from the point of looking into an area of thought. But this is not truth and not realistic. A human's life experience does not always come from thought alone. No other creature operates in this way. This is a very important point for people living in a modern society. They will miss out on the other part if one side is excessively developed. Our animal reactions have become paralysed. We can say we have lost our free animal abilities. We are all living under the control of the shadow of scientific rationality and because of this are losing emotional experiences such as fear, imagination, illusions and reverie. We have all become farm chickens instead of wild chickens. Our way of thinking comes from being "factory farm chickens". The main body of our thought is dulled, so when the idea is presented, the concept is from a "factory farm chicken" viewpoint. This stilted way of thinking is something we do not need as it will blunt our creativity. Because the cosmos is so wide and huge we should be able to develop limitless ideas.

G.Y: You need to find a way to explain your concept.

C.C: Turning none logical concepts into a very logical theory.

G.Y: You will leave behind a case study of thought and this thought will show people what have you done and may inspire them to find other new things. What is important for you to find and what is your standpoint? Find the point, and people may like your way of thinking. Maybe the quality of your title and content is just average but the way of deduction is fantastic just like watching a Chinese Puppet fly, jump and act out all human emotions. People enjoy watching the Puppet and it doesn't matter if it exists or not. It gives us a place to think. Do you feel there is someone thinking who may be able to give us a place to think? So, it means you really know what you are doing.

C.C: Do you think I really understand what I am doing?

G.Y: I do not know, but the thing is the value of your research. Your theory is the other thing. Academic is all life things.

C.C: Sure. One needs affirmation when approaching a certain level.

G.Y: Sure, this is what we all hope and we also wish to develop the highest values of life. In a certain state you need to find a way to match the basic discussion. The person who is enlightened does not really need a Ph.D. thesis because these levels are far away from each other.

C.C: Maybe it is a useful step for me to form this thesis in this material world.

G.Y: Keep going, and one day when people agree with you or recognize your concept, you may get a chance to be in a position to enable you to continue your research.

C.C: I wish to create a piece of work by sawing a tree trunk into different lengths and positioning the pieces upright so that the tops make an angled circle. The cut ends would face inwards.

G.Y: It depends on how you saw the trunk. The surface is curved. It will be round no matter how you cut it. You can do it in a rational way or not depending on your thoughts and methods. The different lengths of wood will provide different meanings, or are you trying to focus on the meaning of the circle? Because the circle is permanent, permanent is non-changing. The action of cutting is not permanent. How are you going to cut it if you set up your artwork in a permanent form? The audience will still say your artwork is speaking for itself no matter how you cut it. I would present a case and let the audience explain it for themselves. You will need to provide various explanations if you set up the artwork as a simple subject. In other words, a paradoxical discussion may be required.

C.C: Do you mean my topic?

G.Y: No, the process. It is the process of what you set up in a discussion and it depends on the paradoxical level. If someone's level is higher than yours then this will make you listen. It all depends on how you discuss it.

C.C: I have a question. If I continue to discuss and explain, and use different viewpoints to prove my argument, will it be possible to continue the discussion if the argument changes?

G.Y: One is a scientific argument and the other is an artistic argument. That is the difference between science and art. It is different to discuss the existence of DNA and the existence of *Ch'an*. *Ch'an* is greater than science. It is an all embracing philosophy. One can call *Ch'an* "totality science" because it can produce revelations enabling one to see things on higher levels. You have to check, is there a consistency between both thought and discussion? You also need to look at the core of your thought, is it the same as your argument? If your method of argument can be established then all your work will be established too. No matter how you change your work, the work won't be able to be established if your method of argument hasn't been established too!

C.C: I have never thought like that before. That is why I cannot make my mind up and continue trying different things.

G.Y: Once you can turn your work into hundreds of different forms then you are

succeeding. Use this as an enlightenment to create hundreds of forms from one. If you control the thought at the core then you only need to act. Action is an external appearance of behaviour. The essence of external things is one. There are many things that you cannot discuss at the same time.

G.Y: Most goods in the market do have one characteristic in common. It is that they gather focus. Give the discussion or problem a focus, just like an advertisement. It takes the unnecessary away and gives the object a dramatic focus. Do you feel discussion is the same too?

C.C: So just pick the essence and leave the rest of it.

G.Y: Yes! Other things just depend on what you would like to add. For example, you can add a ball, add water or other materials, in the end, simplicity is best. Earth, water, fire and wind are the four elements of the cosmos. The combination and change between those four elements create birth and death. It becomes *Ch'an* if you add emptiness to it. Earth, water, fire and wind are the four big elements of the Universe. If every artwork employs emptiness then it will become established. Every thing will be establish if you apply the highest principle of metaphysical supervision. For example, a teacup, you try to create something from it! To create something with the material available. If you get water as material then do something with it. But it is not necessary to make it big. It depends on your argument and quality.

C.C: I had an idea that consisted of burning the outside edge of a large piece of trunk. Dig a concave form and fire the surface of this then put water to the level of the top as a mirror. When people pass it will catch their shadow and the audience can see their own image. It will return to its original being when the audience has left the place.

G.Y: That is like someone who sees his own shadow in the river. Is it him or not him? History already argues it just like the moon in the water. The old truth can apply to the contemporary situation. There is only one difference thing and that is the location.

C.C: The location needs time to make a judgement.

G.Y: Let the future do it.

G.Y: Have you discuss your new thing and old thing with your tutors yet?

C.C: I haven't mentioned the new idea yet.

G.Y: What are their comments?

C.C: They encourage me to continue with my research. I mentioned the idea of combining the concept of garden design into my research. They agreed with it and think I will make more focus now. Because the *Ch'an* concept is so wide they suggested that I make an outline looking at both Eastern and Western

artists' concepts of *Ch'an*.

G.Y: To write an outline is a very good thing to do. Once this outline is finished then half the job is done and this teaches you how to operate and how to solve the question.

C.C: I am trying to find the critical point of mind and phenomena.

G.Y: *Ch'an* phenomena! Who knows *Ch'an* has phenomena? We only know by feeling- a phenomenon of *Ch'an*. Imagine the unexpected. People are too complicated and too materialistic. *Ch'an* presents simplicity, searching for one thing at a time. As I said earlier *Ch'an* is showing only simplicity. There is a Spanish painter who uses only pastel colour rather than rich colour. His painting has a taste of the Oriental- a white, bright and simple world. His paintings are very quiet and peaceful. I got some taste of the orient from this but does the artist considered his painting to be quiet and peaceful? This is a critical point.

C.C: Do I need to take a risk?

G.Y: Yes.

C.C: One of my friends employs *jingjie* 境界 phenomena in his research framework.

G.Y: *Jingjie* cannot explain *Ch'an* because *Jing* is within a limitation. *Ch'an* has no limitation. What your teacher will help you with is how to make the theory legitimate. What is very important is how precisely you know *Ch'an*.

C.C: Is it the importance of the indefinite state?

G.Y: No, *Ch'an* is a kind of mind phenomenon which is able to break *Wuming* (Buddhism- *avidya*, ignorance and unknowing). Break the barrier of behaviour and *karma*. *Ch'an* is life wisdom if one is using it. Any behaviour or action has *Ch'an*, *Ch'an* exists even in the action of butchering the pig. No attachment and no barrier. The butcher feels no emotional reaction and the action is automatic. That is the necessary wisdom to solve the limitation, the hard life. These limitations have different levels. You may see my life as quite free with no limitation but my life is actually quite hard. The limitation in everyone is different. From crude to delicate, this is the difference of level. So you get to know what *Ch'an* is for yourself. Use what you understand and make an argument of the question of crude and delicate. You have to find a point where you can stand strongly even if people are trying to go against your artwork. Someone somewhere will know your work has a meaning of *Ch'an* behind the visual phenomenon if the person understands *Ch'an*.

C.C: Will I set up a limitation if I try to have *Ch'an* in my artwork all the time?

G.Y: Firstly, how many people know of *Ch'an* in the whole world population? Secondly, there is still a problem if your argument or standpoint is not strong

enough although you have reached the level you want. You want this work able to argue. The first thing is the material you choose and use. You need to define the relationship between differing materials. You need to discuss from these differing essential characteristics.

C.C: For example, I need to find the processes of how wood is burnt into charcoal.

G.Y: You need to find the standpoint of the material, the cultural concept, the society and different kind of viewpoint. You prefer charcoal and you understand the detail of it. You can use a lot of artistic language to translate the charcoal. So it is not a physical matter. But how can it let you translate? Because it has its own shape, colour and physical quality, you felt something from those factors, and there is a wisdom arising from them. You have to make an argument from the nature of those materials. For example, wood, flowers and so on. There is a flower world behind the flower. When the world of flowers and trees are changed because you tied and join them, you have changed. Does it mean something because you joined them? You have to find the value of the act. These actions free you from attachment in *Ch'an*. This is an important reference. The point of society, human culture, history or material is to understand the significant quality of every single thing. The material itself does have a life and nature. So, I do not express everything, what I do is borrow the materials and present them from different angles to make them present themselves. This method is unique, independent and cannot be replaced by anything. The nature of material gives it its own character. You need to draw a picture in your mind. Whatever you put in then creates the form. The argument is inside the picture.

Conference Paper

Abstract

Chun Chao Chiu *20/04/2001*

1. Introduce myself
2. To explain what research area I am going to talk about. (“*yi jing*”)
3. To explain what *yi jing* is.
4. The relationship between *yi jing* and *Ch’an*
5. The Japanese Garden
6. Gardens, art and Western eyes. (How has *Ch’an* influenced Western contemporary artists’ thoughts and work? How have Western artists’ translated *Ch’an* into their creativity?) I draw three examples from the works of 1. Isamu Noguchi 2. Richard Serra 3. Liliane Lijn
7. Introduce my own creative work.
8. Conclusion

- To explain what research area I am going to talk about. (“*Yi Jing*”)

The thrust of my study focuses upon Chinese *yi jing* theory combined with Taoist and *Ch’an* (Zen) concepts to give me a “tool” with which to explore the challenge of modern western art.

For the past two hundred years artists have talked about the possibility of Western and Eastern aesthetic traditions meeting or fusing together, and there have been some artists who achieved remarkable results in their work, which exemplifies the resultant resonance brought about by such fusion.

The champions of this type of approach to producing work, such as Ryusaburo Umehara, Foujita, Zao Wu- Ki, and Nam June Paik however remarkable, can only be viewed as being inconclusive or at best, “work in progress” artists. Thankfully the majority of practicing artist are still heartened by such brave attempts and continue their own efforts in making a contribution towards the goal of combining these two aesthetic traditions.

The aim of my research through my focus on the Chinese aesthetic, in particular “*yi jing*” theory in general, is to explore the connection between the aesthetic result (the work) and the approach of the artists concerned who attempt to utilise a “non dualistic” approach.

I consider the “*yi jing*” aesthetic to be the framework of my research in analysing modern visual art forms and practices because of the close similarity it has to the state of the artistic spirit of Western art work. “*yi jing*” as a state of mind, is composed of two elements. *Yi* (a thought, an idea) and *Jing* (state of phenomenon). It is considered to be the highest state of achievement for a Chinese artist to approach this state of “*yi jing*”. This is the concept which guides the artist to consider the state of subject and ultimately realise the emptiness of all subject phenomenon but to give the viewer of the work an insight into the unity of “I” (the artist him/herself) and nature whilst the work is being made.

For example, when we look at Chinese landscape painting, the landscape seems to have existed somewhere but has been changed by the artist. Those mountains, trees and rivers are a kind of real phenomenon that allow us to approach comprehension in a physical sense. We can imagine walking or climbing in such an environment. The artist created the landscape painting by his feeling which comes from deep inside the heart of the artist's comprehension of life.

When these thought/feelings and life comprehension meet they ideally compact into a sudden enlightenment. The understanding of this creates a “*yi jing*” atmosphere appropriate to experiencing that environment. The painting has now become a symbolic phenomenon not just a copy or photo from nature. We could say that the thought has been fully represented immediately without any further additional touches.

In order to represent the artist's own idea of “*yi jing*” in the modern environment, he also uses line, point, 2 or 3 dimensions, sound, words and other materials to construct a sense of rhythm. These elements can be replaced or reconstructed by other materials but the fundamental definition that will not be moved (centring) is to approach the concepts of “*yi jing*” in the work.

- **The relationship between “*Yi Jing*” and *Ch'an*.**

Yi jing emphasises motion and scene coming together to create the phenomenon (atmosphere) of space. And from that point indirectly to deliver the message of “*yi jing*”. Because the idea of “Man and Heaven being together”, one carries this emotion and is at one with Nature in a humble attitude. This state of phenomenon becomes “no Man without Heaven and no Heaven without Man”.

Ch'an is associated with nature. *Ch'an* masters are often enlightened by experiencing the natural world. There is no apprehension, he is a part of nature and nature is inside him. Also, *Ch'an* denies that words can represent this wisdom correctly. Master and followers are connected by realisation of Mind. "If there is no form in the illusion of space, how can the illusion be a phenomenon" (虛空無形, 何有象曰) Alternatively "this state (境生象外) comes from the outwardly/externally phenomenon". Internal phenomenon and external phenomenon are united together in harmony to approach the beauty of "*yi jing*".

● The Japanese garden.

Social, economic and other factors, such as the world wars and cultural revolutions of the 19th century prevented the Chinese from really exporting the great ideas of "*Ch'an*" to the rest of the world. However, through the efforts of such writers as D.T. Suzuki (first in 1927) and later in 1929 who published *Essays in Zen Buddhism*. Chinese *Ch'an* known in Japanese as Zen, has filtered these ideas albeit with a Japanese perspective through to the West.

This major world philosophy and idealism has had a great influence upon Western minds in the production of works of art. The "*Ch'an* Garden" exemplifies the harmony of the use of space, form and emptiness and has helped to promote the use of such concepts in the production of art from a Western perspective. The state of the "spirit" of *Ch'an* similarly has had a far reaching effect upon the psychological state of the artists concerned in the production of their work. The feeling engendered by exposure to such philosophy and *Ch'an* influenced art work has therefore exposed Western artists to ideas such as non-dualism, the universal format, concepts and the direct experience of the "here and now". Further

considerations upon the use of the indefinite and surrounding space contained in any kind of art work have greatly interested Western artists who have attempted to incorporate these into their work.

- **Gardens, art, and Western eyes.**

(How has *Ch'an* influenced Western contemporary artists' thoughts and work? How have Western artists' translated *Ch'an* into their creativity?) I draw three examples from the works of 1. Isamu Noguchi 2. Richard Serra 3. Liliane Lijn

I will be focussing upon the work and illustrating with slides (writings) of these three artists in this research to examining how influential these have been towards this goal of the fusion of Western and Eastern modes of artistic expression.

- **Isamu Noguchi**

Isamu Noguchi works in the fields of architecture sculpture using specially formulated ideas of the use of space influenced by the natural world. His sculptures and garden designs have complex engagements with the environment and architectural space. As he said about the relation of his garden “sculpturing a space, a groping to another level of sculptural experience and use.”²⁰⁵ He was using traditional forms, making the natural rock into a sculptural space and placing the artistic within natural phenomena to create a new concept of artistic “spatial travel”.

- **Moving onto Richard Serra.**

²⁰⁵ P93, *Between East and West*, Isamui Noguchi, by Sam Hunter. Abbeville Press

From these points of view, we can now more easily understand Richard Serra's sculpture. The American sculptor Richard Serra has created simple yet powerful steel sculptures with a foundation of ideas drawn from the Japanese *Ch'an* garden and this is the major influence upon his own work. Richard Serra lived for six weeks in Kyoto in 1970. He spent many long hours observing the *Ch'an* gardens within the temples. This period completely changed his ideas about sculpture. For those *Ch'an* masters, *Ch'an* gardens consider principles of time, meditation, and motion. Serra has therefore discovered the gardens have different sense of space-time to Western eyes. And saw the garden/field as entire space, there is no space without time and no time without space. These two elements complexly engage with each other.

- Moving onto Liliane Lijn

Liliane Lijn uses modern products of industry in many shapes and guises. She is particularly interested in Koans (a question without an answer) - special word puzzles given by *Ch'an* meditation masters to their novice Buddhist monks to help deepen their spirituality and realisation of the nature of things through self endeavour. "Koan" is Lijn's title for her innovative documentary on the Koan sculptures she produces as part of her work. She has written

"During the day a thin line of blue light pierces the white marble. As dusk falls, the blue inner light gradually suffuses the whole sculpture and the clean geometry of its form is softened by the liquid patterns in the grain of the marble. The inner space of the sculpture gains vitality as the outer lineaments of form dissolve with the approach of night. The central concept is of light held within matter."

- My practical works.

Finally I will be discussing my own practical work in the light of my investigations into the body of theory I have discovered.

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29. Walter De Maria, *The Lightning Field*, 1977. Stainless steel poles, average height

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33. Hiroshi Teshigahara, Shiseido Art House, Kakegawa-Shi, Shizuoka Prefecture. 1982.

34. Hiroshi Teshigahara, *Dean Teahouse*, Numazu, 1992

35. Hiroshi Teshigahara, *Monumental Ikebana*, 65 Thompson Street, New York City, 1990.

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